# MAFIAS, MACHINES AND MOBILIZATION: THE SOURCES OF LOCAL POWER IN THREE DISTRICTS IN NORTH SUMATRA, INDONESIA

RYAN TANS
(B.A. WITH HONORS, CALVIN COLLEGE)

A THESIS SUBMITTED FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS

DEPARTMENT OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN STUDIES
NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF SINGAPORE

2011

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The friends I made in Singapore and Indonesia were a great blessing of this project. My Southeast Asian Studies friends, my Frisbee friends, my second-degree friends and my friends-in-law were all a source of good times and great memories. Pitra was my guide through the University administration and around the city of Singapore. Many people helped me in Indonesia by talking to me, giving me advice, inviting me into their homes and watching the World Cup with me. For their hospitality, I would like to thank my friends in Medan, Rantauprapat, Padangsidimpuan, Tebingtinggi and Sidikalang, not to mention Aaron.

Several people read versions of the thesis and provided encouragement and insight. For that I would like to thank Natasha Hamilton-Hart, Phan Phuong Hao, Matt Winters, and Sohyun Park.

My supervisor was everything one could hope for in a teacher. He was knowledgable, engaged, creative and he made great gin-and-tonics. Thank you, Douglas.

My family was a constant source of support. I love you, Mom, Dad, Eric, Margaret, Ibu and Noel.

Ida, you are the sunshine of *my* life.

# CONTENTS

# SUMMARY

The thesis analyzes the sources of power that underpin political coalitions in three districts in North Sumatra in an attempt to explain patterns of local political contention. Three basic types of coalitions contend for power in these places. Local mafias are powerful when the officials who direct the executive office, bureaucratic agencies and the assembly collude to distribute state patronage among themselves and their allied business contractors. Party machines deploy party resources, legislative power and influence within supra-local bureaucracies to dominate local politics. When mafias and machines are evenly matched and well-developed social organizations are present, one or both sides may attempt to gain an advantage by mobilizing previously excluded constituencies. The expanded, mobilizing coalition that results has a broader popular base than mafias or machines. The strategies that each type of coalition chooses to pursue power are constrained by the resources they can summon from the institutions upon which they are based. The approach applies in other Indonesian districts to the extent that similar sources of power exist in other places. Recent competition among coalitions implies that political power in Indonesia is recentralizing even as new constituencies join local ruling coalitions.

# LIST OF FIGURES

# GLOSSARY OF INDONESIAN TERMS AND ACRONYMS

| | |
|---|---|
| BITRA | *Bina Keterampilan Pedesaan Indonesia*, Building Rural Skills in Indonesia (An NGO) |
| BPN | *Badan Pertanahan Nasional*, National Land Tenure Board |
| *Bupati* | District Executive |
| *Demokrat* | *Partai Demokrat*, Democrat Party |
| DPR | *Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat*, National People's Representative Assembly |
| DPRD | *Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat Daerah*, Regional People's Representative Assembly |
| *Golkar* | *Golongan Karya*, Functional Group (A political party) |
| IPK | *Ikatan Pemuda Karya*, Working Youth Society |
| *Jaksa Agung* | Attorney General |
| *Kepala Desa* | Elected Village Leader |
| *Kepala Dinas* | Government Agency Director |
| KNPI | *Kongres Nasional Pemuda Indonesia*, Indonesian National Youth Congress |
| KPK | *Komisi Pemberantasan Korupsi*, Anti-corruption Commission |
| MK | *Mahkamah Konstitusi*, Constitutional Court |
| MPI | *Masyarakat Pancasila Indonesia*, Community for Indonesian National Principles |
| PDI-P | *Partai Demokrasi Indonesia – Perjuangan*, Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle |
| *Pemuda Pancasila* | Youth for National Principles |
| PKK | *Pemberdayaan Kesejahteraan Keluarga*, Family Welfare and Empowerment (A network of women's associations) |

| | |
|---|---|
| PPK | *Panitia Pemilihan Kecamatan*, Sub-district Election Logistics Committee |
| *Pujakesuma* | *Putra Jawa Kelahiran Sumatra*, Sons of Java Born in Sumatra |
| PPP | *Partai Persatuan Pembangunan*, Development United Party |
| PKS | *Partai Keadilan Sejahtera*, Welfare and Justice Party |
| *Sekda* | *Sekretaris Daerah*, District Secretary |
| *Serangan fajar* | "Attack at dawn," refers to passing out money on the eve of an election |

Figure 1. Map of North Sumatra



# PART ONE

## Introduction

In 2010, Indonesia entered its third round of local elections since the end of authoritarian rule in 1998 and the passage of decentralization reforms in 1999. The reforms gave local assemblies (*Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat Daerah*, DPRD) the authority to draft legislation, enact local taxes and deliberate the administrative budget, and district executives (*Bupati*) the right to appoint bureaucrats and license some natural resource concessions. In addition, the reforms guaranteed local government revenues by providing that the central government would annually release block grants to each district and province.[1] Local government, comprised of an assembly and an executive, assumed discretionary authority far beyond what it had possessed during Suharto's New Order regime.

Parallel electoral reform encouraged thousands of candidates across Indonesia to compete for local office. The first round of elections from 1999-2005 was indirect, in that popularly elected district assemblies voted to select executives.[2] Beginning with the second round in 2005, direct popular elections were held to determine district executives.[3] These contests have been intensely

---

[1] The reforms were initially formulated in Laws No. 22/1999 and No. 25/1999, and later revised in Laws No. 32/2004 and 33/2004. For overviews, see Vedi Hadiz, *Localising Power in Post-Authoritarian Indonesia: A Southeast Asia Perspective* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010): 63-87; Henk Schulte Nordholt and Gerry van Klinken, "Introduction," in *Renegotiating Boundaries: Local Politics in Post-Suharto Indonesia*, Henk Schulte Nordholt and Gerry van Klinken, eds. (Leiden: KITLV Press, 2007): 1-29.

[2] Indirect elections were provided for in Laws No. 2/1999, No. 3/1999 and No. 4/1999. For overviews, see Hadiz, *Localising Power*, 63-87; International Crisis Group, "Indonesia: Preventing Violence in Local Elections," Asia Report No. 197, 8 December 2007.

[3] Law No. 32/2004 revised the election procedures. See Michael Buehler, "Decentralisation and Local Democracy in Indonesia: The Marginalisation of the Public Sphere," in *Problems of*

competitive. Some districts and cities have fielded more than 10 candidates for the office despite very high costs associated with a successful campaign.[4] Vote-buying and paying bribes to obtain party nominations have been commonplace.[5] In rare instances, violence, especially against property, has marred the process.[6]

At the same time that the reforms were being instituted, the number of Indonesian districts and provinces exploded because old administrative units were subdivided to create new, smaller ones.[7] From 1998 to 2004, the total number of districts increased from 292 to 434 despite the fact that Indonesia's land area shrank when the United Nations assumed administrative control of East Timor in 1999. More recently, district partitioning has continued but at a slower rate, so that in 2010 there were 491 Indonesian districts. These territorial changes further decentralized Indonesian politics by creating hundreds of new bureaucratic agencies and elected offices at the local level.

New districts, competitive elections and the discretionary powers of local government have generated a great deal of scholarly and journalistic interest in Indonesia's local politics. Local government decisions impact

---

*Democratisation in Indonesia: Elections, Institutions and Society*, Edward Aspinall and Marcus Mietzner, eds. (Singapore: ISEAS, 2010): 267-285.

[4] At the local level, Indonesia is administratively divided into rural districts (*Kabupaten*) and urban municipalities (*Kota*). Although Indonesia's administration has since been simplified, a good overview can be found in Michael Malley, "Regions: Centralization and Resistance," in *Indonesia Beyond Suharto: Polity, Economy, Society, Transition*, Donald Emmerson, ed. (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1999): 71-105. For simplicity, I will often use the term "district" to refer collectively to *kabupaten* and *kota*.

[5] Indonesians refer to these practices as "money politics." See Syarif Hidayat, "*Pilkada*, Money Politics and the Dangers of 'Informal Governance' Practices," in *Deepening Democracy in Indonesia? Direct Elections for Local Leaders (Pilkada)*, Maribeth Erb and Priyambudi Sulistiyanto, eds. (Singapore: ISEAS, 2009): 125-146.

[6] ICG, "Preventing Violence in Local Elections."

[7] *Pemekaran wilayah* is the Indonesian term for forming new districts by subdividing existing ones. See Ehito Kimura, "Proliferating provinces: Territorial politics in post-Suharto Indonesia," *South East Asia Research* 18.3 (2010): 415-449.

village development programs, local economies, national party politics and the effectiveness of Indonesia's well-publicized reforms. Who are the local politicians who have been given so much influence in Indonesia's new system, and how did they achieve their positions?[8]

**Characterizing Local Power**

The majority of local politicians previously pursued careers in business, the bureaucracy, party service or parastatal youth organizations. In a survey of 50 local elections in 2005, Marcus Mietzner found that almost two-thirds of candidates were bureaucrats or entrepreneurs, and that another twenty-two percent were party officials.[9] Vedi Hadiz affirms a similar "political sociology of local elites," noting that local politics have been dominated by bureaucrats, entrepreneurs and "goons and thugs" associated with the New Order's corporatist youth organizations.[10] Notably absent are military officers, who in post-reform Indonesia rarely win local office.[11] Mietzner calls these politicians members of "the oligarchic elite,"[12] and Hadiz argues that they "have been able to usurp…reforms…to sustain their social and political dominance."[13] They are so well-established, according to

[8] A similar question was posed in Henk Schulte Nordholt, "Renegotiating Boundaries: Access, agency and identity in post-Suharto Indonesia," *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* 159 (2003): 572.
[9] Marcus Mietzner, "Local democracy: Old elites are still in power, but direct elections now give voters a chance," *Inside Indonesia* 85 (Jan-Mar 2006): 17-18.
[10] Hadiz, *Localising Power*, 92-93.
[11] Michael Malley, "New Rules, Old Structures and the Limits of Democratic Decentralisation," in *Local Power and Politics in Indonesia: Decentralisation & Democratisation*, Edward Aspinall and Greg Fealy, eds. (Singapore: ISEAS, 2003): 102-116.
[12] Marcus Mietzner, "Indonesia and the pitfalls of low-quality democracy: A case study of the gubernatorial elections in North Sulawesi," in *Democratization in Post-Suharto Indonesia*, Marco Bunte and Andreas Ufen, eds. (New York: Routledge, 2009): 141.
[13] Hadiz, *Localising Power*, 3.

Michael Buehler, that "the majority of candidates competing in local elections…[are] closely affiliated with New Order networks," and even when incumbents lose elections they "have largely been replaced by representatives of the same old elite."[14]

According to this view, local elites form cartels comparable to bosses in the Philippines or criminal godfathers in Thailand.[15] Hadiz calls the arrangements "'local strongmen', corrupt local machineries of power… [and] pockets of authoritarianism."[16] Henk Schulte Nordholt chooses the term "regional shadow regimes."[17] John Sidel elaborates that "local 'mafias', 'networks', and 'clans,'" which are "loosely defined, somewhat shadowy, and rather fluid clusters and cliques of businessman, politicians, and officials" govern at the local level in Indonesia.[18]

Shadowy mafias may be common, but they are not ubiquitous. A few scholars have identified other types of networks that contest local power. Buehler, for example, has claimed that "strong personal networks at the sub-district level" were a necessary condition to winning district office in South Sulawesi.[19] Claire Smith, meanwhile, has argued that Golkar (*Golongan Karya*, Functional Group), which had been the regime's electoral vehicle

---

[14] Buehler, "Decentralisation and Local Democracy," 276.

[15] John Sidel, *Capital, Coercion, and Crime: Bossism in the Philippines*. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999); James Ockey, "The Rise of Local Power in Thailand: Provincial Crime, Elections and the Bureaucracy," in *Money and Power in Provincial Thailand*, Ruth McVey, ed. (Singapore: ISEAS, 2000): 74-96.

[16]Vedi Hadiz, *Localising Power*, 3-4.

[17] Henk Schulte Nordholt, "Renegotiating Boundaries," 579.

[18] John Sidel, "Bossism and Democracy in the Philippines, Thailand, and Indonesia: Towards an Alternative Framework for the Study of 'Local Strongmen'" in *Politicising Democracy: The New Local Politics of Democratisation*, ed. John Harriss, Kristian Stokke and Olle Törnquist (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004): 69.

[19] Michael Buehler, "The Rising Importance of Personal Networks in Indonesian Local Politics: An Analysis of District Government Head Elections in South Sulawesi in 2005," in *Deepening Democracy in Indonesia?* Erb and Priyambudi, eds.: 102.

during the New Order, operated a party machine in North Maluku, notwithstanding the prevailing view that the local influence of political parties was in decline.[20]

In addition, the literature on ethnic and religious politics highlights an influential group of elites that was excluded from power during the New Order. Since the regime collapsed, cultural elites have played pivotal roles, both destructive and constructive, in local politics. In some districts, violent militias and riotous mobs mobilized around ethnic and religious identities.[21] In others, ethnic and religious traditions have mediated popular organizing and widespread political participation.[22] Old aristocracies and royal houses, traditional symbols of ethnic leadership, have reemerged during the post-reform era and attempted to convert their symbolic power into political influence.[23]

The literature demonstrates wide variation among politically influential local elites. "New Order elites" are not monolithic: they include politicians, businessmen, bureaucrats and thugs. Grassroots networks matter in some districts, while parties play different roles in different places. Cultural elites mobilize their followers to participate in diverse forms of collective action.

---

[20] Compare Claire Smith, "The Return of the Sultan? Patronage, Power, and Political Machines in 'Post'-Conflict North Maluku," in *Deepening Democracy in Indonesia?* Erb and Priyambudi, eds.: 303-326; Dirk Tomsa, "Uneven party institutionalization, protracted transition and the remarkable resilience of Golkar," in *Democratization in Post-Suharto Indonesia*, Bunte and Ufen, eds.: 176-198.

[21] Jamie Davidson, "Studies of Massive, Collective Violence in Post-Soeharto Indonesia" *Critical Asian Studies* 41.2 (2009): 329-349.

[22] Jamie Davidson and David Henley, eds. *The Revival of Tradition in Indonesian Politics: The deployment of adat from colonialism to indigenism* (New York: Routledge, 2007); Deasy Simandjuntak, "Milk Coffee at 10AM: Encountering the State through *Pilkada* in North Sumatra," in *State of Authority: The State in Society in Indonesia*, Gerry van Klinken and Joshua Barker, eds. (Ithaca: Cornell SEAP, 2009): 73-94.

[23] Gerry van Klinken, "Return of the sultans: The communitarian turn in local politics," in *The Revival of Tradition in Indonesian Politics*, Davidson and Henley, eds.: 149-169.

Any analysis of local politics after Indonesia's decentralization reforms must account for such variation. Accordingly, the study of local politics must not assume that political contenders resemble one another.

This thesis argues that at least three types of coalitions contend for local political power in Indonesia. Each coalition is associated with a particular set of institutions that provide the sources of its power. *Mafias* control local state institutions. *Machines* have the backing of a major political party. *Mobilizing coalitions* seek to mobilize and incorporate previously excluded social constituencies. Mobilization as a strategy is available to both mafias and machines, but in pursuing it mafias and machines are transformed into the third type of coalition. As mobilizing coalitions, they must accommodate the expectations of new groups that are neither part of the state nor the constituents of political parties. The types of coalitions pursue contrasting strategies that are based on the resources available to their associated institutions. Finally, political contention among these types of coalitions is oriented vertically. Machines are directed from the center, mafias encompass local elites and mobilizing coalitions respond to popular pressures.

The argument draws on evidence from case studies in three districts in North Sumatra province.[24] In Labuhan Batu district, a well-established mafia collapsed into two factions in 2008. During the 2010 district election, the breakaway faction mobilized thousands of campaign volunteers to defeat the incumbent district executive's wife at the polls. In Tapanuli Selatan district,

---

[24] Because local coalitions have taken shape within the decentralized institutional arrangements of post-reform Indonesia, the case studies examine local political history since the end of the New Order. Further study might investigate how deeper historical legacies have influenced local power structures.

the Golkar party machine waged a political war against an entrenched mafia from 2005 to 2010. In 2005, the fierceness of the competition prevented either side from winning the district election. But after the district was subdivided into three new districts in 2008, the machine won the 2010 election and took control of the executive branch. Finally, in Serdang Bedagai district, the Golkar machine defeated a local mafia in a close and controversial election in 2005. Once in office, the new executive reached out to farmers and fisherfolk in an effort to mobilize a broad social coalition. The strategy succeeded, and in 2010, the newly mobilized coalition reelected the machine by the largest margin in North Sumatra.

Limited as it is to three of Indonesia's 491 districts and municipalities, the case selection does not allow for conclusions that presume general explanations.[25] Instead, close observation in specific districts contributes to a more detailed understanding of the processes that shape local elite coalitions.[26] This kind of analysis clarifies the intervening variables that lead to particular outcomes.[27] This thesis examines the composition of contending coalitions as an intervening variable that modifies the effect of institutions on strategies of political contention. In addition, comparisons across three cases generate hypotheses that can be tested by further comparison against more general observations of other North Sumatra districts.

---

[25] Barbara Geddes, "How the Cases You Choose Affect the Answers You Get: Selection Bias in Comparative Politics," *Political Analysis* 2 (1990): 131-150.

[26] This kind of analysis is sometimes called process-tracing. See Erik Martinez Kuhonta, Dan Slater and Tuong Vu, "Introduction: The Contributions of Southeast Asian Political Studies," in *Southeast Asia in Political Science: Theory, Region and Qualitative Analysis*, Erik Martinez Kuhonta, Dan Slater and Tuong Vu, eds. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008): 1-29.

[27] Stephen Van Evera, *Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997).

The approach developed in the thesis will be useful elsewhere in Indonesia to the extent that similar sources of political power are available to aspiring elites. This is likely to be the case in districts that resemble the districts under study economically, socially and institutionally. The cases exhibit institutional constraints and socio-economic variation typical of Indonesia's Outer Islands. Economically, two of the three districts depend on agricultural products and natural resources, while the third district has a diversified economy that nevertheless features agricultural products. Socially, the cases vary from rural, poor and remote in Tapanuli Selatan to an urban hinterland in Serdang Bedagai. Institutionally, district governments in North Sumatra are subject to the same fiscal, electoral and bureaucratic arrangements as the rest of Indonesia, albeit with important exceptions. Fiscally, they operate with much smaller budgets than the most densely populated districts on Java and districts that receive substantial revenue-sharing payments.[28] Nor should they be compared to Indonesia's special autonomous regions which are governed by special fiscal and electoral laws.[29]

The emphasis on coalitions draws the analysis into the study of collective action. Charles Tilly has described a model for collective action in which contending groups mobilize resources as they struggle for power.[30] Dan Slater, drawing on Etzioni's work, classifies those resources as coercive, remunerative and symbolic.[31] Slater notes that different sets of elites have

[28] These districts are in East Kalimantan, Riau, South Sulawesi and Papua, Direktoral Jenderal Perimbangan Keuangan, "Data APBD Tahun 2010," *Kementerian Keuangan Republik Indonesia*, 20 July 2010; accessed at www.djpk.depkeu.go.id, 23 June 2011.
[29] Indonesia's special autonomous regions are Aceh, DKI Jakarta, DIY Yogyakarta and Papua.
[30] Charles Tilly, *From Mobilization to Revolution* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1978).
[31] Amitai Etzioni, *A Comparative Analysis of Complex Organizations: On Power, Involvement, and Their Correlates* (New York: Free Press of Glencoe, 1961), cited in Dan

access to different resources in varying proportion. National state officials, for example, command coercive resources due to their authority over the military and police, while communal elites manipulate symbolic resources in their capacities as religious and customary leaders.[32] The value of the resources at the disposal of a particular organization depends on its relationship to other contending groups. As Martin Shefter explains in the context of the American party system, when parties are strong and the bureaucracy is weak, parties may override the bureaucracy to extract resources from the state and use them to construct patronage machines. Conversely, when the bureaucracy is strong but parties are weak, an unresponsive bureaucratic state may develop.[33] Under specific conditions, powerful individuals can capture such bureaucracies and direct them capriciously; a state of affairs Benedict Anderson called the "*state-qua-state*."[34] Elites exercise power to the degree that their influence over institutions allows them to deliver resources, or in Tilly's language, to the degree they command mobilized groups.

In North Sumatra, provincial and local bureaucracies, certain national parties, local and provincial legislatures, business contractors and popular organizations are powerful institutions that command remunerative, symbolic and, to a lesser extent, coercive resources. In the districts, the resources available to contending coalitions depend on what combination of these

---

Slater, *Ordering Power: Contentious Politics and Authoritarian Leviathans in Southeast Asia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010): 16.

32 Slater, *Ordering Power*, 15-17.

33 Martin Shefter, *Political Parties and the State: The American Historical Experience* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994): 61-63.

34 He was referring specifically to New Order Indonesia. Benedict Anderson, "Old State, New Society: Indonesia's New Order in Comparative Historical Perspective," *Journal of Asian Studies* 42.3 (1983): 488.

institutions they control. The set of resources, in turn, constrains the types of political strategies they are able to utilize in pursuit of power. The next section outlines the pressures encouraging the formation of coalitions, while the following section describes the institutions associated with each type of coalition and the resources and strategies that flow from them.

**Coalitions, not Strongmen**

There is a widespread misperception among political observers of Indonesia that decentralization has liberated district executives from the restraining influence of vertical oversight or horizontal accountability. In the expression of the Indonesian press, district executives adopt the style of "little kings."[35] *The Economist* has articulated the case for the caricature. "Prospective candidates rack up big debts to bribe voters and political parties. Then, they resort to embezzlement in office to pay the debts." In this way, they circumvent electoral accountability. *The Economist* and others cite hundreds of ongoing corruption cases involving district executives as evidence of misgovernment, and blame local autonomy because "this is what happens when local politicians are given their head."[36]

*The Economist* has accurately described the situation on the ground, but its conclusion that debt and corruption are symptoms of local autonomy is mistaken. On the contrary, when district executives take office with big debts and face prosecution for corruption, it is evidence of Indonesia's local accountability mechanisms at work. Debts oblige executives to answer to

---

[35]See, for example, Nasrullah Nara, "Pilkada dan Raja-raja Kecil," *Kompas*, 1 March 2008; Bersihar Lubis, "Tuan dan Pelayan," *Harian Medan Bisnis*, 27 April 2011.
[36] "Power to the people! No, wait…" *The Economist*, 19 March 2011.

creditors and arise in part due to strong horizontal checks, formal and informal, that exist at the local level. The central government has the authority to exercise vertical oversight in a variety of ways, including prosecuting corruption, disbursing local revenues, auditing local expenditures and overturning local legislation. Although it is convenient to reduce local government to the actions of district executives, in fact their behavior is circumscribed by many constraints.

Local elections are expensive. Candidates must sponsor rallies, pay for advertising and underwrite their campaign team.[37] Opinion polling costs Rp 300 million (US$33,000) in districts outside of Java.[38] Add unreported expenses, to buy votes and bribe political parties, and costs reach into the millions of dollars. In 2005, Sukardi Rinakit estimated that district campaigns cost up to US$1.6 million.[39] By contrast, district budgets are limited and district executives do not enjoy full discretionary authority over them. In the average 2010 budget, sixty-one percent of annual expenditures covered fixed administrative costs, leaving only Rp 260 billion (US$29 million) available for discretionary procurement and development spending.[40] A district executive who depends on budget fraud to raise political funds will attempt to capture

[37] Marcus Mietzner, "Political opinion polling in post-authoritarian Indonesia: Catalyst or obstacle to democratic consolidation?" *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* 165.1 (2009): 95-126.

[38] "Biaya Politik Makin Mahal," *Kompas*, 14 June 2010.

[39] Sukardi Rinakit, "Indonesian regional elections in praxis," *IDSS Commentaries* No. 65 (Singapore: Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies, 27 September 2005) cited in Hadiz, *Localising Power*, 121. Buehler more conservatively estimates US$500,000-700,000 in "resource-poor districts" in South Sulawesi, but expects higher costs in wealthier districts. Buehler, "Importance of Personal Networks," 116, fn. 20.

[40] Calculated from Ditjen Perimbangan Keuangan, "Data APBD Tahun 2010."

these funds by marking up the value of tendered projects and by demanding kickbacks from successful contractors.[41]

To achieve this, a district executive needs the cooperation of local business contractors, high-level bureaucrats and district assembly members. Business contractors must agree to the terms and pay the kickbacks. The bureaucrats directing government agencies (*dinas pemerintah*), such as education, health and public works, must collaborate because they manage the projects. Finally, the assembly must acquiesce because it passes the annual budget (*Anggaran Pendapatan dan Belanjaan Daerah*, APBD) and budget report (*Pertanggungjawaban Pelaksanaan* APBD), and it debates the annual executive performance review (*Laporan Keterangan Pertanggungjawaban Bupati*, LKPj).[42] By tempting executives to defraud the district budget, campaign debts thus encourage the formation of coalitions among the executive, assembly, bureaucracy and local business contractors.[43] Not coincidentally, in many cases an executive's creditors come from these same groups, further cementing the coalition.[44] Although the mechanism is

[41] "Satu Tersangka Setiap Pekan," *Kompas*, 18 January 2011. Contrast the current spoils of elected office to the New Order, when salary lands were the prize of intensely fought village elections. See Douglas Kammen, "Pilkades: Democracy, Village Elections, and Protest in Indonesia," in *Southeast Asia Over Three Generations: Essays Presented to Benedict R. O'G. Anderson*, ed. James Siegel and Audrey Kahin (Ithaca: Cornell SEAP, 2003): 303-330.

[42] Although Buehler notes that assemblies' oversight powers have diminished with Law 32/2004, they nevertheless use deliberations over budgets and performance reviews as a pretext to stonewall or criticize the executive, and to establish special investigatory committees (*Pansus, Panitia Khusus*). As a result, executives continue to "buy off parliamentarians" despite the new law. Buehler, "Decentralisation and Local Democracy," 277-280.

[43] Obviously, officials can choose not to cooperate, which they often do. Nevertheless, executives who fail to fashion a manageable coalition, such as the executive in Tapanuli Selatan during 2005-2010, usually get replaced by candidates who do.

[44] "Bisnis Berelasi dengan Politik," *Kompas*, 30 March 2011.

informal, the high cost of campaigning ensures that many district executives remain horizontally accountable to their local political allies.

The central government holds broad powers of vertical oversight. The independent central government auditing agency (*Badan Pemeriksaan Keuangan*, BPK) reviews district finances every year. The provincial attorney general and the central anti-corruption agency (*Komisi Pemberantasan Korupsi*, KPK) have the authority to pursue criminal investigations for corruption.[45] That they do this often and successfully is evident from the huge number of cases. In early 2011, 155 corruption investigations of executives throughout Indonesia were ongoing or recently concluded.[46] Furthermore, most districts depend on block grants (*Dana Alokasi Umum*) from the Ministry of Finance for annual revenues. In 2010, the average district received 54% of its annual revenue from these grants.[47] Although the Ministry determines disbursement amounts according to a predetermined formula, district governments are nevertheless fiscally dependent on Jakarta. Finally, the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Home Affairs monitor local legislation and strike down local laws judged to contravene national ones. As of April 2010, for example, the Ministry of Finance had objected to 4,885 local taxes (*pajak daerah*) and user fees (*retribusi daerah*), of which the Ministry of Home Affairs had overturned 1,843.[48]

---

[45] On the uneven exercise of their authority, see Jamie Davidson, "Politics-as-usual on trial: Regional anti-corruption campaigns in Indonesia," *The Pacific Review* 20.1 (March 2007): 75-99.

[46] "Satu Tersangka Setiap Pekan," *Kompas*, 18 January 2011.

[47] Calculated from Ditjen Perimbangan Keuangan, "Data APBD Tahun 2010."

[48] Robert Endi Jaweng, "Otonomi dan Distrosi Perda Investasi," *Kompas*, 20 July 2010. Taxes and user fees that ostensibly deter investment comprise the overwhelming majority of overturned legislation. By contrast, the central government has taken a cautious approach to religiously-based regulations. For example, the Supreme Court (MA, *Mahkamah Agung*)

In sum, accountability mechanisms pressure district executives to conspire with other elites. The most stable district governments obtain the cooperation of business contractors, high level bureaucrats and a majority of the district assembly. When elected officials are broke and in debt, they must fashion a ruling coalition that includes these groups if they hope to get elected, pay off their campaign debts and pursue reelection. It is not individual "little kings" who are corrupt, but collusion across the political class.

## Three Types of Coalitions

At least three types of coalitions facilitate political collusion at the local level. The discussion that follows presents local mafias, party machines and mobilizing coalitions as ideal types, while in practice they change over time and exhibit features of multiple types.[49] Nevertheless, conceptualizing ideal types is a useful tool for analyzing the resources and interests that animate real-world coalitions. Furthermore, the types are not meant to be exhaustive because in other locations different sources of power may predominate. They do, however, capture the range of variation present in the case studies described here.

Contrasting institutional composition distinguishes local political coalitions. Mafias integrate business contractors with the organs of local government only. Machines use party connections to involve provincial and

---

refused to review a controversial anti-prostitution law in Tangerang because its passage satisfied procedural requirements. See Robin Bush, "Regional Sharia Regulations in Indonesia: Anomaly or Symptom?" in *Expressing Islam: Religious Life and Politics in Indonesia*, Greg Fealy and Sally White, eds. (Singapore: ISEAS, 2008): 174-191.

[49] For ideal types, see Max Weber, *The Methodology of the Social Sciences*, trans. Edward Shils and Henry Finch (Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1949).

central bureaucracies, such as the judiciary, the Governor's office, the anti-corruption agency and the election commission, in local politics. Mobilizing coalitions, which may and often do utilize money and the use of violence, include at least one organization, such as an NGO, a youth group or a religious association, which mobilizes popular support among diffuse groups such as peasants, villagers, or ethnic communities.

The set of institutions that each coalition controls shapes its resources, strategies and orientation. Local mafias often practice "money politics" among the political elite, party machines use organizational networks to bring central and provincial power – coercive, remunerative and symbolic – to bear on local politics, and mobilizing coalitions seek strength in numbers by incorporating previously excluded groups.

*Local Mafias*

Mafias can only exist when they control local state institutions. Coalition members—business contractors, assembly members, high-level bureaucrats and the executive—cooperate to extract financial resources from the local bureaucracy and the annual budget. In districts where forestry and plantation agriculture is lucrative, they also manipulate land concessions. Members divide the spoils among themselves to maintain the coalition and use the remainder to contest elections. The coalition is oriented horizontally because it is limited to members of the local elite. Local mafias resemble Sidel's "shadowy…cliques of businessman, politicians, and officials," and their prevalence explains the observation of Mietzner and Hadiz that most local politicians come from these groups. Youth group thugs, the other group

in Hadiz' political sociology of elites, participate as business contractors and assembly members.[50]

Mafias extract patronage from the district budget in a variety of ways, the most important being the project tender process as detailed above.[51] In addition, executives embezzle from the district budget directly. The budget line for social aid expenses (*Belanjaan Bantuan Sosial*) is particularly vulnerable to embezzlement because charitable projects are not audited except to confirm disbursement. Many executives abuse their discretion and social aid expenses tend to rise dramatically in years immediately preceding elections.[52] A third method of fraud involves skimming the interest from funds deposited in provincial banks. Many districts run sizeable annual budget surpluses which they deposit in provincial state-owned banks or convert to Bank Indonesia certificates (*Sertifikat Bank Indonesia*).[53] In North Sumatra, the provincial state-owned bank is called Bank Sumut (*Bank Sumatera Utara*, North Sumatra Bank); other provinces have their own bank. Many districts as well as the provincial government own shares in the bank. According to one source, provincial banks secretly reinvest district funds at an interest rate

---

[50] For more on youth groups, see Loren Ryter, "Their Moment in the Sun: The New Indonesian Parliamentarians from the Old OKP," in *State of Authority*, van Klinken and Barker, eds.: 181-218; Ian Wilson, "The Rise and Fall of Political Gangsters in Indonesian Democracy," in *Problems of Democratisation in Indonesia,* Aspinall and Mietzner, eds.: 199-218.

[51] For examples, see "Bisnis Berelasi dengan Politik," *Kompas*, 30 March 2011.

[52] "Anggaran Daerah Masih Dibajak Elite Lokal: Modus Terbesar dengan Topeng Bantuan Sosial," *Jawa Pos*, 20 December 2010.

[53] "Rp 43 Triliun Anggaran Daerah Disimpan di SBI," *Suara Pembaruan*, 28 June 2006; "Wapres: BPD Jangan Timbun Uang di SBI," *Jawa Pos*, 22 December 2010.

greater than the bank rate. The difference in interest remains unreported, and the profits are divided between district and bank officials.[54]

The district executive's control over bureaucratic appointments presents opportunities to extract money by selling positions. This occurs at all levels of the local bureaucracy, but the price of the bribe rises with the pay scale. Entry level jobs reportedly cost Rp 20 million (just under US$2,000) in Central Sulawesi in 2003,[55] while a source in Tapanuli Selatan claimed that agency directors (*kepala dinas*) paid Rp 500 million (US$55,000) for their positions during the 2005-2010 executive term.[56] Selling positions of this caliber, however, undermines the mafia coalition, because agency directors who have purchased their positions will be less inclined to cooperate with the executive than those who were appointed for their loyalty.

Patronage extracted from the district budget and bureaucracy circulates as follows. Executives and agency directors exercise their official authority over the budget and bureaucratic appointments to embezzle state funds, skim interest and collect bribes. Furthermore, they strike deals with business contractors to award project tenders or land concessions in return for kickbacks. Finally, the executive obtains the acquiescence of the district assembly by bribing members. Often, single individuals play multiple roles. For example, assembly members may also own a contracting business. This is often the case when youth group members sit in the district assembly. Although the coalition requires the cooperation of each group, the lynchpin is

[54] Personal interview, Medan, 26 August 2010; "BI Paling Bertanggung Jawab dalam Praktik Pemberian Komisi," *Kompas*, 5 January 2010.
[55] Lorraine Aragon, "Elite competition in Central Sulawesi," in *Renegotiating Boundaries*, Schulte Nordholt and van Klinken, eds.: 40-41.
[56] Personal interview, Padang Sidimpuan, 22 October 2010.

the district executive. Because the coalition's financial resources originate in local state institutions, control over them is crucial to the success of the coalition.

By circulating state patronage among a narrow faction of local elites, mafias achieve a stable equilibrium between the value of available patronage and the cost of maintaining the coalition, except in election years. Popular elections strain the coalition in two ways. First, national election law requires that all candidates obtain nomination from a party or coalition of parties representing 15% of the electorate in a given district.[57] Second, candidates must muster a plurality of voters to win the election. Both requirements introduce huge costs. It has been widely reported that Indonesian political parties auction candidate nominations to the highest bidder.[58] The larger the party's share of district assembly seats, the more expensive the nomination fee. For the largest parties, bribes range from hundreds of millions to billions of rupiah (tens of thousands to hundreds of thousands of US dollars).[59] Once they procure a nomination, mafia candidates must raise popular support. Because mafias do not extend patronage beyond their core members, except to the extent that construction contracts provide employment to laborers, their candidates resort to vote-buying as the fastest means of attracting voters during in election years. At campaign events, candidates hand out rice,

[57] Although candidates may run independently, very high costs ensure that few attempt it and fewer succeed. See Buehler, "Decentralisation and Local Democracy," 273-274.
[58] See, for example, Michael Buehler and Paige Tan, "Party Candidate Relationships in Indonesian Local Politics: A Case Study of the 2005 Regional Elections in Gowa, South Sulawesi Province," *Indonesia* 84 (October 2007): 67.
[59] Nankyung Choi, "Local Elections and Democracy in Indonesia: The Riau Archipelago," *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 37.3 (August 2007): 341; Hidayat, "'Informal Governance' Practices," 130-131.

clothing and other household necessities. They “reimburse” event participants for transport costs. As the election approaches, and especially on the eve of the election, they hand out cash in key communities.

Although corrupt campaign practices are alarming, they have not enabled mafias to circumvent the democratic process.[60] On the contrary, mafias resort to vote-buying and bribing parties out of weakness. In 2010 in North Sumatra, many mafias lost elections despite efficient and widespread use of these methods, not least the incumbent mafia in Labuhan Batu. In some places where the tactics succeeded, they provoked violent reactions from the opposition, ranging from angry demonstrations to riots.[61]

Three weaknesses make mafias unstable. First, their candidates must expend campaign funds for both nominations and votes, while machine candidates spend less on nominations and mobilization candidates spend less to buy votes. Second, mafias do not inspire popular loyalty and challengers have an advantage when voters are dissatisfied with the performance of an incumbent mafia. Finally, mafias rely too heavily on control over the office of the district executive. If they lose executive patronage, they have little hope of preserving the coalition. This weakness is particularly debilitating when party machines use provincial or central influence to remove district executives by denying them nomination or seeing to it that they are prosecuted for corruption.

---

[60] Hadiz, by contrast, argues that they have. Hadiz, *Localising Power*, 119-123.

[61] ICG, “Preventing Violence in Local Elections.”

*Party Machines*

In contrast to mafias, party machines draw strength from Indonesia's highly centralized parties, which enjoy influence over and access to provincial and central state institutions. Machines will be most influential in provinces where one party dominates the provincial government. By combining party organizational resources, the legislative functions of local and provincial assemblies and the coercive power of bureaucratic institutions like the attorney general's office, machines can attack the vulnerabilities of a mafia even without significant local support. In most districts, however, machines also benefit from the support of party allies in the local bureaucracy and assembly. Machines are oriented vertically upward, because they link local officials with party power at higher levels of the Indonesian state.

After decades of nearly uninterrupted control over the Governor's office in North Sumatra, Golkar is the party with the most influence in the provincial bureaucracy.[62] In local power contests, Golkar deploys gubernatorial power for partisan purposes. Two appointments in particular have far reaching consequences. The provincial attorney general (*Jaksa Agung*) coordinates criminal and corruption investigations and decides whether to drop, prosecute or hand cases over to the anti-corruption commission. The task is easily politicized when the attorney general's party allies wish to challenge local mafias, especially those involved in corruption, illegal logging or gambling. Whenever district executives do not finish a term, or when new districts are formed, the Governor appoints acting executives

[62] Since the consolidation of the New Order, the one exception was during 2005-2008, when Rudolf Pardede of PDI-P succeeded Rizal Nurdin after the latter died in office.

(*Penjabat Bupati*) endowed with the same powers as elected ones. They hold discretionary authority over local patronage because they too oversee project tenders and appoint bureaucratic officials. In newly formed districts, the role has additional importance because of the responsibility to form the local election commission.[63] An acting executive in a new district can divert patronage away from aspiring mafias and ensure that sympathetic commissioners coordinate the inaugural election.

Golkar's legislative power in North Sumatra, though not absolute, still reinforces the party's bureaucratic power. During the legislative term 2004 – 2009, Golkar held 19 out of 85 seats in a provincial assembly that included 14 parties. The second-largest party, Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle, (*Partai Demokrasi Indonesia – Perjuangan*, PDI-P), had 13 seats.[64] Golkar tumbled in the 2009 general elections and won only 13 seats, well behind Democrat's (*Partai Demokrat*) 27, but still ahead of the other 13 parties represented in the expanded 100 seat legislature.[65] The party's provincial electoral performance is indicative of its dependable voting base across North Sumatra, which has elected similar legislative contingents at the local level.

In the fragmented provincial assembly, the size of the Golkar faction gives it negotiating leverage over legislation, while its influence within the executive branch makes it a necessary parliamentary coalition member. When parties in the provincial assembly collude to share patronage, Golkar

---

[63] Although the district executive does not directly appoint the five commissioners, he or she appoints a representative to the selection board and can thereby veto appointments by proxy.

[64] Komisi Pemilihan Umum Sumatera Utara, "Daftar Nama-Nama Anggota DPRD Provinsi Sumatera Utara Hasil Pemilihan Umum 2004," no date; accessed at www.kpusumut.org, 13 April 2010.

[65] Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat Daerah Provinsi Sumatera Utara, "Fraksi-Fraksi," no date; accessed at www.dprd-sumutprov.go.id, 27 June 2011.

benefits.[66] The assembly allocates projects which Golkar-influenced provincial agencies can direct to favored districts. The agencies have more leeway to distribute jobs, projects and favors to party allies when Golkar loyalists and friendly parties sit on assembly oversight committees.

Legislative power confers another advantage to Golkar with respect to the creation of new districts. Proposals to create new districts by subdividing existing districts must gain legislative approval at all levels of government: district, provincial and central. This allows the major parties, which influence legislation at each level, to draw new districts which benefit them and handicap local rivals. If they subdivide districts in such a way that it splits the voting base of local mafias, party machines have an opportunity to counter-mobilize a reconstituted voting base.[67]

In addition to its bureaucratic and legislative powers, Golkar's organizational resources advantage machine-backed district executives. Party discipline reduces the costs of obtaining legislative cooperation, because sanctions replace bribery as the mechanism of influence. Sanctions are compelling because parties, not assembly members, control seats. When parties revoke the party membership of assembly members, the assembly member loses his or her seat and the party chooses a replacement.[68] During elections, a machine candidate has a financial advantage over candidates who

---

[66] Slater has argued convincingly that parties in the national assembly collude to share patronage. See Dan Slater, "Indonesia's Accountability Trap: Party Cartels and Presidential Power after Democratic Transition," *Indonesia* 78 (October 2004): 61-92.
[67] Kimura, "Proliferating provinces," 423-425.
[68] The parties' right of recall (PAW, *pergantian antarwaktu*) was established in Law No. 22/2003 and upheld by the Constitutional Court (*Mahkamah Konstitusi*) in decision No 008/PUU-IV/2006. See M. Hadi Shubhan, "'Recall': Antara Hak Partai Politik dan Hak Berpolitik Anggota Parpol," *Jurnal Konstitusi* 3.4 (December 2006): 30-57.

have to expend campaign funds to chase nominations. Machine candidates are more likely to enjoy the active support of local party members compared to unaffiliated candidates who pay a bribe in exchange for nominal support.[69] Parties also contribute costly technical assistance in the form of political consultants and polling services.[70]

Party discipline, however, does not always extend to leadership. Parties can act capriciously as a result of internal power struggles, undermining the strength of the machine. At times, factional competition paralyzes machines, as it did in 2005 in Tapanuli Selatan when opposing Golkar factions fought bitterly over the candidate nomination. Leadership transitions lead to backtracking and uncoordinated strategy. In Binjai city, where Golkar's former provincial chair was outgoing mayor in 2010, the party opposed the mayor's brother-in-law in municipal elections and both candidates lost. Organizational incoherence is the Achilles heel of party machines.

Although Indonesian parties interpenetrate the bureaucracy and comprise the legislatures, it is important to note that parties, governors and provincial assemblies do not possess formal authority over the Indonesian state's centralized instruments of coercion: the police and armed forces. Not even Golkar can presume the political support of the police or armed forces.[71]

Party machines have a formal advantage over local mafias because they face lower costs and enjoy greater resources. They save money on party nominations and cooperation between the district assembly and executive.

[69] Mietzner, "Political opinion polling," 111-112.
[70] "Biaya Politik Makin Mahal," *Kompas*, 14 June 2010.
[71] On civil-military relations, see Jun Honna, "From *dwifungsi* to NKRI: Regime change and political activism of the Indonesian military," in *Democratization in Post-Suharto Indonesia*, Bunte and Ufen, eds.: 226-247.

They attack opponents with criminal investigations and bureaucratic reassignments, and they have access to a much larger pool of patronage because provincial allies earmark projects for their districts. When machines face electoral challenges, provincial patronage helps them to develop a broad coalition, further reducing costs by decreasing their dependence on vote-buying to mobilize popular support.

*Mobilizing Coalitions*

Any elite coalition can involve social mobilization, provided that it derives a significant measure of political power from organized social groups that support it collectively. Even in districts where popular organizations are numerous and well-developed, they rarely possess formal access to the state. But when local mafias or party machines face the prospect of losing power, they sometimes reach out to existing social organizations or catalyze new mobilizations. In this sense, mobilizing coalitions are oriented vertically downward because they connect political elites with larger and more diffuse social groups.

Mobilized social groups are neither ardent opponents of the elite nor complacent puppets of their regimes. While Sidel's observation that Indonesians vigorously participate in collective and contentious politics leads him to believe that popular mobilization is the most likely impediment to predatory local rule, the allegiance of local society should not be so quickly presumed.[72] The strongest mobilizing coalitions emerge in districts where competing elite coalitions are evenly matched and dense social networks and

[72] Sidel, "Bossism and Democracy," 73-74.

well-developed organizations already exist. Close electoral competition may prompt one or both coalitions to seek popular support in order to gain an advantage. The pressure to mobilize applies whether the types of contending coalitions are similar or different. However, when a machine challenges a mafia its formal advantages give it little incentive to mobilize unless the mafia does so first. If mobilized social groups are routinized into durable organizations, they join the existing coalition and pressure it to respond to their needs and expectations. The implication is paradoxical: the more fully integrated a mobilized social group is within an elite coalition, the more it constrains those elites.

Because expanding the coalition entails new constraints and obligations, local politicians countenance it only as a last resort.[73] Whenever possible, elites choose strategies such as vote-buying or fear mongering that mobilize voters without organizing them.[74] These strategies, however, are unreliable because they are based on single transactions or fleeting fears. Voters who accept payments, for example, might accept larger bribes from other candidates or fail to vote for any candidate. Organizing, by contrast, generates loyalty by institutionalizing relationships between social groups and the coalition. Vote-buying may bring enough people to the polls to win in a secure bailiwick, but in competitive districts coalitions integrate social organizations or face defeat.

---

[73] Martin Shefter, *Political Parties and the State*, 6-7.

[74] The 2010 Medan mayoral election was exemplary in this regard. See Edward Aspinall, Sebastian Dettman and Eve Warburton, “When religion trumps ethnicity: A regional election case study from Indonesia,” *South East Asia Research* 19.1 (March 2011): 27-58.

Mobilization typically occurs via the mediation of well-developed organizations because they already command a following, understand how to organize collective action and possess the capacity to distribute patronage. In North Sumatra, NGOs and youth groups most often play the role, but religious and cultural associations are also prominent mobilizers.[75] Organized labor rarely, if ever, does so.[76] Different organizations reach different constituencies. NGOs serve poor occupational groups like farmers, fisherfolk and workers and employ middle-class professionals. Youth groups integrate business contractors, criminal networks and laboring urban males. Religious and cultural associations appeal to religious fealty and ethnic solidarity, respectively.

In North Sumatra in general, politicians offer a combination of three basic incentives to attract social groups to the coalition. First, politicians frequently appeal to national, ethnic, religious or community identities to convince groups that they will advance their collectively perceived interests. Identity appeals often stoke fear and prejudice, but they also promise preferential benefits for the group. In North Sumatra's Tapanuli Selatan district, for example, Golkar's candidate won the support of an entire community in 2010 by promising to move the district capital to Sipirok town. Second, incumbent politicians distribute patronage in the form of special community development projects, perquisites for village leaders and projects tendered to NGOs or other organizations. Distributing patronage to social

---

[75] For example, candidates in the 2010 Medan mayoral election courted ethnic associations with limited success and Muslim religious leaders with more. NGOs and youth groups were also active campaigners. Aspinall, et al. "When religion trumps ethnicity."

[76] Hadiz, *Localising Power*, 145-160.

groups badly strains mafias, because their resources are limited to what they can generate locally, but not machines, which draw resources from multiple sources. Finally, opposition coalitions without access to state patronage may promise populist policy changes. In North Sumatra in 2010, common promises were free identity card processing, free education and district-sponsored life insurance. Mobilizing coalitions experience intense pressure to deliver on their promises once in office.

The ability of a coalition to retain the support of organized social groups depends on its ability to continue to meet their expectations while in office.[77] Machines can please a wide range of social groups because they control a deep pool of patronage and exercise influence over provincial and national policy. In cases where mafias mobilize significant social support, by contrast, they face serious obstacles to following through on their promises because of the numerous constraints limiting the power of the district executive. The executive must satisfy the core members of the coalition, a difficult task of itself, while ensuring that there is patronage left over for societal partners.

## Organization of the Thesis

The thesis considers each case study in turn, highlighting the contests between elite coalitions in each district and demonstrating the sources of each coalition's power. It begins with Labuhan Batu, where an opposition mafia

[77] For an argument that incumbent machines in American cities carefully managed supply and demand for patronage resources, see Steven Erie, *Rainbow's End: Irish-Americans and the Dilemma of Urban Machine Politics, 1840-1985* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988): 6-17.

used a strategy of social mobilization to defeat an incumbent mafia. Tapanuli Selatan follows, where the Golkar machine displaced a timber mafia by subdividing the district into three new districts. It presents Serdang Bedagai third because all three types of coalitions have contended for power in that district. In 2005, a local mafia gave way to the Golkar machine after the election resulted in a virtual tie. Once in office, Golkar pursued a strategy of social mobilization and constructed a broad and reliable social coalition.

The case studies are based on 78 field interviews conducted in North Sumatra during several trips to the province during 2010. The interview sources include journalists, politicians, civil servants, election commissioners, businessmen and NGO activists. Their names are withheld for confidentiality. Archival newspaper research corroborates and augments the interviews. In most cases, newspaper sources were consulted for the years 2005-2010 in order to cover one complete election cycle.[78] Press statements released by North Sumatra's NGO community are a valuable source of data, as are government publications, especially the Central Statistics Bureau's Statistical Yearbooks and election tabulation data published by North Sumatra's various election commissions.

Finally, the conclusion situates the study within North Sumatra more generally and discusses the implications for decentralization and democracy. In 2010, mafias fared poorly at the polls and were replaced in many places by Golkar candidates. If they did not open the coalition to new members, either popular groups or the machine itself, mafias could not resist machine challenges that deployed the combined resources of central parties, provincial

[78] For online media sources, the URL is given in the List of Press Sources.

bureaucracies and legislative influence. The results reflect ongoing political recentralization that mirrors administrative counter-reform pursued by both the Megawati and Yudhoyono governments. Paradoxically, counter-reform made politics more inclusive because close competition between mafias and machines drew previously excluded social groups into local politics. Whether this indicated democratic growth or was merely a temporary phenomenon remains to be seen.

# PART TWO

## Labuhan Batu: Mafias and Mobilization

Political contention in Labuhan Batu district exemplifies the pressures that make local mafias unstable, even when they do not contend against party machines. The Golkar machine never challenged it, but the district's incumbent mafia collapsed anyway in 2008, midway through its second term in office. The two resulting factions adopted starkly contrasting approaches to the 2010 district elections, but neither was able to reconstitute a durable coalition. The limited pool of state patronage and the challenges of direct elections strained each version of the mafia and made politics unpredictable as successive coalitions failed.

Although no mafia fully succeeded, the outcome of the 2010 election illustrates that a campaign strategy of mobilization is superior to the techniques referred to as "money politics." When the incumbent mafia splintered, the resulting factions neatly divided local institutions. The executive, Haji Tengku Milwan, maintained his grip on the bureaucracy, while his opponents were a clique of businessmen and allied district assembly members. Their contrasting positions shaped their respective campaign strategies. Milwan leaned on the civil service to support his wife, Adlina, as a proxy candidate and spent an enormous amount of money to secure party nominations and buy votes. The opposition defeated Adlina decisively by mobilizing an extensive campaign network with the help of local youth groups and NGOs. The logic of money politics ultimately created damaging contradictions that undid incumbent Milwan and his wife.

Located at the southern end of the plantation belt that parallels Sumatra's east coast, Labuhan Batu and its derivative districts, Labuhan Batu Utara and Labuhan Batu Selatan, produce by far the most palm oil and rubber in North Sumatra.[1] Steadily rising global palm oil prices have made these districts some of the province's wealthiest as measured by gross regional product and gross product per capita.[2] To be sure, the estates industry is dominated by large private and state-owned firms, but about one-quarter of the land devoted to palm oil and three-quarters of the land devoted to rubber are smallholdings, suggesting that small farmers also benefit from the current boom.[3]

For a district with such vast plantations, Labuhan Batu is surprisingly urban. Accordingly, civil society organizations thrive. Its overall population density ranks in the top half of the province and residents are further concentrated in the district capital Rantauprapat, where over one-third of registered voters live.[4] Several youth groups have active chapters and politically influential leaders. Ethnic associations, particularly Javanese and Chinese, command wide followings within their communities. And various NGOs serve farmers, plantation laborers and children, among others.

---

[1] Dinas Perkebunan Propinsi Sumatera Utara, "Rekapitulasi Luas Areal dan Produksi Komoditi Kelapa Sawit Propinsi Sumatera Utara," and "Rekapitulasi Luas Areal dan Produksi Komoditi Karet per Kabupaten di Propinsi Sumatera Utara," 2004; accessed at www.deptan.go.id/daerah_new/sumut/disbun_sumut/index, 15 April 2010.

[2] Badan Pusat Statistik Sumatera Utara, "Sumatera Utara in Figures 2009," Tables 11.3.1 and 11.3.3, 2009.

[3] Disbun Sumut, "Rekap Luas Areal dan Produksi Kelapa Sawit," and "Rekap Luas Areal dan Produksi Karet."

[4] Badan Pusat Statistik, "Population Census 2010: Province Sumatera Utara," 2010; accessed at www.bps.go.id, 6 July 2011; BPS Sumut, "Sumatera Utara in Figures 2009," Table 1.1.3; Komisi Pemilihan Umum Labuhanbatu, "Rekapitulasi Jumlah Pemilih, TPS dan Surat Suara Pemilihan Umum Kepala Daerah dan Wakil Kepala Daerah di Tingkat Kabupaten," Rantauprapat, 18 June 2010.

Historical legacies have disarticulated labor and the traditional nobility, however. The Malay aristocracy, whose sultans had collaborated with the Dutch during colonial days, was overthrown during the Indonesia Revolution in a string of bloody coups along Sumatra's east coast. Some of the worst violence occurred in Labuhan Batu, where five ruling houses were attacked and dozens of family members killed in March 1946.[5] For plantation labor, the Revolution initiated a brief period of organized action that lasted until 1957 when the nationalization and militarization of Dutch estates heightened repression. In 1965-66, labor was completely silenced by the destruction of the Indonesian Communist Party (*Partai Komunis Indonesia*, PKI) and its affiliated labor union, SARBUPRI (*Sarekat Buruh Perkebunan Republik Indonesia*, Union of Indonesian Plantation Workers).[6] Evidence once again suggests that violence was at its worst in Labuhan Batu, where killing squads in Rantauprapat filled nightly quotas.[7]

**Milwan's Mafia**

For the first ten years of the post-reform era, a former army colonel named Haji Tengku Milwan towered over Labuhan Batu's local politics. He became district executive when the assembly selected him in the 2000 indirect elections and he governed the district during two five-year terms. His

[5] Anthony Reid, *The Blood of the People: Revolution and the End of Traditional Rule in Northern Sumatra* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1979): 230-238.
[6] Ann Stoler, *Capitalism and Confrontation in Sumatra's Plantation Belt, 1870-1979* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985): 125-164.
[7] Yen-ling Tsai and Douglas Kammen, "Anti-Communist Violence and the Ethnic Chinese in Medan, North Sumatra," in Douglas Kammen and Katharine McGregor, eds. *The Contours of Mass violence in Indonesia, 1965-1968* (Singapore: NUS Press for the Asian Studies Association of Australia, forthcoming 2012).

distinguished military career, his success as an administrator and Labuhan Batu's booming economy gave him sufficient stature that the local press fancied him a "national player".[8] He had ambitions to match and in 2007 made an abbreviated gubernatorial bid.[9] He successfully entered provincial politics in 2010 when he was elected chair of the North Sumatra board of the Democrat Party.[10]

The army assisted Milwan in the transition from uniformed to civilian office by posting him to Medan in 1998.[11] The final posting, as deputy assistant for personnel in the regional military command, carried a promotion to colonel and returned him to his home province just before the first district elections of the post-reform era. He resigned from the post in 2000 to take up the executive office in Labuhan Batu.[12]

Milwan's use of the titles, "Haji" and "Tengku" denote religious and ethnic claims, respectively. The title Haji attests that Milwan has completed the pilgrimage to Mecca, while "Tengku" asserts a claim to aristocratic Malay heritage. Although Milwan was born in Medan, local tradition has it that Milwan's family is from Labuhan Bilik, where a Malay statelet existed before the 1946 revolution.[13]

---

8 See, for example, "Stop, Konflik Fredy Vs Milwan Demi Lancarnya Pembangunan Labuhanbatu," *Harian Sinar Indonesia Baru*, 29 October 2008.

9 "HT Milwan Tidak Akan Mundur," *Waspada Online*, 31 October 2007; accessed 28 July 2011.

10 Sasli, Sarsin, Samsudin and Rinaldi, "Musda Demokrat Sumut: Milwan Terpilih, Kader Internal Tersisih," *Harian Medan Bisnis*, 4 November 2010.

11 KPU Labuhanbatu, "Profil Calon Kepala Daerah dan Wakil Kepala Daerah," in *Laporan: Penyelenggaraan Pemilihan Kepala Daerah & Wakil Kepala Daerah Kabupaten Labuhanbatu Tahun 2005 Buku 1*, Rantauprapat, January 2006: 55-69.

12 Milwan graduated from the military academy (*Akademi Militer*) in 1978. He is listed as Tengku Wilham on Academy rolls. During his career he was posted around the archipelago, most notably in Papua, Aceh and Riau. Thanks to Douglas Kammen.

13 Reid, "The Blood of the People," 236.

Milwan's political power, however, was based not on noble birth but on control of the district budget, power over the local bureaucracy and collusive relationships with business contractors and assembly members. In other words, Milwan led a local mafia that grew rich by accepting kickbacks, selling positions and embezzling money. According to one report, project commissions during Milwan's administration exceeded ten percent.[14] To pay the fee, contractors inflated procurement costs by as much as 50%.[15] Executive Milwan preferred large, extravagant projects, and the costs to the state multiplied. For example, a sports complex in Rantauprapat took 13 years to build and cost nearly Rp 15 billion (US$1.6 million).[16] A recent investigation has implicated Adlina, Milwan's wife, in an organized syndicate that was accepting payments for bureaucratic appointments.[17] Finally, the administration embezzled money directly from the district budget. The central audit board noted irregularities in district financial reporting during fiscal years 2004, 2005 and 2006, prompting one local newspaper to proclaim, "Audit findings: Millions of rupiah of Labuhan Batu district funds evaporate."[18]

The mafia included associates in many local institutions, particularly construction contractors, youth group leaders, assembly members, bureaucrats and Golkar. Fredy Simangunsong, a business contractor and leader of the local

[14] Fajar Dame Harahap, "KPK Prioritaskan Korupsi di Labuhanbatu," *Harian Medan Bisnis*, 2 December 2008.
[15] "Pagu Proyek Diduga Mark Up," *Metro Rantau*, 28 June 2010.
[16] Fajar Dame Harahap, "GOR Rantauprapat Terbesar di Sumut Diresmikan," *Ekspos News*, 19 November 2009; accessed 1 February 2011.
[17] "Orang Dekat Hj Adlina Jadi Tersangka Kasus Calo CPNS," *Metro Rantau*, 14 October 2010.
[18] Hasriwal HS, "Temuan BPK, Ratusan Juta Dana APBD Labuhan Batu 'Menguap,'" *Waspada Online*, 28 May 2008; accessed 26 July 2011.

chapter of the youth group named Working Youth Society (*Ikatan Pemuda Karya*, IPK), was Milwan's most prominent ally. Fredy claims to have received contracts worth Rp 11 billion (US$1.2 million) in 2006 and Rp 24 billion (US$2.6 million) in 2007, while paying kickbacks totaling Rp 1.6 billion (US$175,000).[19] Youth groups in North Sumatra commonly act as government contractors, and it is likely that Fredy's counterparts from other youth groups used the same business model. Fredy's wife, Elya Rosa Siregar, sat in the district assembly as a member of the Golkar delegation. She and her assembly colleagues cooperated with Milwan to the extent that they approved each budget and financial report. A member of the 1999-2004 assembly, Daslan Simandjuntak, recently testified before the central anti-corruption agency that he accepted bribes of Rp 30 million (US$3,000) to pass those bills.[20] Three bureaucratic agencies were singled out in the central audit board's reports of financial irregularities: health (*Dinas Kesehatan*), education (*Dinas Pendidikan*) and settlement and infrastructure (*Dinas Kimprasda*, *Permukiman dan Prasarana Daerah*). It is likely that the directors of these agencies were close allies of the mafia.[21]

Golkar's role in the mafia deserves special mention to demonstrate that Milwan's coalition was not a party machine. Since retiring from his military career in 2000, Milwan has been opportunistic in his dealings with parties.[22] In

---

[19] "Pendukung Berat Bupati Labuhanbatu Mulai Jaga Jarak," *Harian Sinar Indonesia Baru*, 4 November 2008.
[20] Zai, "HT. Milwan Dilaporkan Ke KPK," *Ini Medan Bung*, 10 Februari 2011; accessed 28 July 2011.
[21] "Ketua Demokrat Sumut HT Milwan diduga korupsi," *Harian Sinar Indonesia Baru*, 11 March 2011.
[22] "Loyalitas Milwan Dipertanyakan," *Harian Mandiri*, 2 November 2010; accessed 28 July 2011.

2005, he was elected to lead the local chapter of Golkar at a time when its 11 assembly seats were more than any other party. PDI-P, its nearest competitor, held 8 seats and 10 other parties shared the remaining 26 seats.[23] During the peak of the mafia's power, the chairmanship helped Milwan negotiate with the district assembly and offered a tantalizing chance at the gubernatorial nomination. Milwan did not, however, win Golkar's endorsement for governor for the 2008 election, and he consequently looked elsewhere for a nomination. He was connected to both Demokrat and Development United Party (*Partai Persatuan Pembangunan*, PPP), much to the annoyance of Golkar's provincial leaders, who sacked him in November 2007.[24] Though Golkar still nominated Adlina during the 2010 district election, it was but 1 of 28 parties to do so and many local members resented the decision. Only five months after Adlina lost, Milwan became the chair of Demokrat's provincial board. He exemplifies the independent politician who purchases nominations and frequently changes party colors.[25]

## The Mafia Collapses

In 2008, Milwan lost control of the mafia and it collapsed into two competing factions. Milwan's faction retained control over the local bureaucracy by virtue of his continuing term in executive office. This faction

---

[23] Yos Batubara, "Evaluasi Hasi Penyelenggaraan Pemilu 2009: Dari Babak Baru Pemilihan Secara Langsung Tahun 2004 Ke Babak Pemilihan Secara Langsung Dengan Suara Terbanyak Tahun 2009 Kabupaten Labuhanbatu – Sumatera Utara," *TePI Indonesia*, no date: 12.

[24] "Heboh Isu Pemecatan HT Milwan, Dari Ketua Partai Golkar L. Batu," *Waspada Online*, 31 October 2007; accessed 6 February 2011; "HT Milwan Siap Dipecat Partai Golkar," *Antara News*, unknown date; "HT Milwan Dicopot Sebagai Ketua Golkar Labuhan Batu," *Waspada Online*, 22 November 2007; accessed 28 July 2011.

[25] Marcus Mietzner, "Political opinion polling," 111-116.

also maintained relationships with various ethnic associations, particularly the Javanese migrant organization *Pujakesuma* (*Putra Jawa Kelahiran Sumatera*, Sons of Java Born in Sumatra). *Pujakesuma's* local chairperson, Sudarwanto, served as deputy executive in Milwan's administration.

The opposing faction, on the other hand, was directed by a clique of powerful business contractors known locally simply as "the mafia". Fredy Simangunsong was the most outspoken of the clique, but Ramli Siahaan, Tutur Parapat and Sujian, also known as Acan, were equal partners in the opposition. Each of these men, except Acan, combined business contracting and plantation ownership with leadership of a youth group. Acan was not affiliated with a youth group but was a prominent leader in Rantauprapat's Chinese community. His business interests, however, were similar to the others, except that he also owned a shipbreaking yard that disassembled old ships and recycled the material.[26] Although D.L. Sitorus was not as personally involved in local politics, the plantation tycoon supported this group as well. His party, the National People's Concern Party (*Partai Peduli Rakyat Nasional*) endorsed the opposition candidate, Tigor Siregar, during the 2010 election, contributing two vital seats toward the 15% nomination threshold.[27]

To the alliance of business contractors and youth groups, the opposition faction added an assertive presence in the district assembly and support from some NGOs. Fredy's wife, Elya Rosa Siregar, led an assembly contingent that claimed the sympathies of members from both of the two largest factions, Golkar and PDI-P, as well as from a number of smaller

[26] Personal interview, Rantauprapat, 31 August 2010.
[27] Fajar Dame Harahap, "Pilkada Labuhanbatu Menunggu Kejelasan Ijazah Adelina," *Ekspos News*, 13 April 2010; accessed 27 July 2011.

parties.[28] Their influence turned the legislature against Milwan. After the 2009 general elections Elya Rosa became chair of the assembly (*Ketua DPRD*) and its hostility toward the executive intensified further. Finally, the opposition selected Suhari Pane, former chair of the election commission and longtime NGO activist, as its candidate for deputy executive in 2010. Suhari's network among activists extended from farmers' to women's organizations and lent credibility to the ticket's populist claims.[29]

While the immediate reasons for the mafia's collapse are vague, the underlying pressures that weakened the mafia are clear enough. Milwan and Fredy were bickering about money because both wished to use the coalition to advance their own ambitions. Fredy owed Milwan approximately Rp 1 billion in kickbacks (US$105,000) and complained that the graft was becoming exorbitant.[30] After all, Milwan needed money if he was to realize his dream to become Governor. Meanwhile, it was rumored that Elya Rosa was at the time considering a bid for district executive, and Milwan likely felt Fredy was becoming too powerful a rival.[31] Regardless of the particulars of the disagreement, Milwan's mafia succumbed to a political dilemma. Two of its most important fundraising techniques, collecting project kickbacks and selling bureaucratic positions, alienated the contractors and bureaucrats whose cooperation it required to perform fraud. Just as Milwan embittered the business community, his heavy-handed management of the bureaucracy

---

[28] See, for example, "Diwarnai Demo, DPRD Labuhanbatu Gulirkan Usulan Hak Angket Terhadap Bupati," *Harian Sinar Indonesia Baru*, 4 March 2009.
[29] Personal interview, Rantauprapat, 11 June 2010.
[30] "Kapolres Tunggu Freddy Melapor," *Labuhanbatu News*, 27 October 2008; accessed 1 February 2011.
[31] Personal interview, Rantauprapat, 31 August 2010.

provoked resentment among civil servants, many of whom did not support Adlina's candidacy as whole-heartedly as they were instructed to do.[32]

In October 2008, the rift became public when the animosity between Milwan and Fredy boiled over. On 16 October, Fredy took the details of his business dealings with Milwan public in a press conference. He announced that he intended to press charges and promised that he and his friends would join the opposition. He also revealed that he had previously visited the district's government agencies one by one to demand that they award government contracts according to proper legal procedure. The press conference touched off a series of public battles that culminated in Adlina's defeat in the 2010 district election.[33]

The press conference was Fredy's retaliation after he had been dismissed from the district chairmanship of the youth organization IPK. He accused Milwan of interfering with the provincial leadership to have him sacked. Milwan accurately valued the importance of the position because IPK's young, underemployed membership represented a pool of cheap labor, a muscular force for street politics and a vehicle for political organizing. Although Fredy never recovered the chairmanship, his associate Ramli incorporated a local chapter of a new youth group, MPI (*Masyarakat Pancasila Indonesia*), on 4 April 2009. Fredy and Tutur Parapat attended the opening ceremony, and the new organization would become a key part of the

[32] Fajar Dame Harahap, "Milwan, Bupati Labuhanbatu Berulangkali jadi Tergugat," *Ekspos News*, 6 May 2010; accessed 28 July 2011.
[33] "Pendukung Berat Bupati Labuhanbatu Mulai Jaga Jarak," *Harian Sinar Indonesia Baru*, 4 November 2008.

opposition faction's electoral campaign against Adlina.[34] Fighting corruption was the theme of the night, and Ramli wasted no time taking the fight to Milwan. For example, on 16 April Ramli requested through the press that the central anti-corruption agency or the provincial attorney general's office investigate the executive office for failing to re-tender projects that rolled over from one fiscal year to the next.[35]

The controversy protesting the reassignment of over one hundred school headmasters provided the opposition faction its best opportunity to attack Milwan. In 2008, shortly after a routine bureaucratic rotation, hundreds of headmasters filed a police report alleging that an unnamed official was soliciting bribes in exchange for a promise of exemption from reassignment. The headmasters then formally complained to the district assembly, where Milwan's foes enthusiastically took up the complaint.[36] In March 2009, four assembly factions proposed a special investigation (*hak angket*) of the reassignments. Elya Rosa was prominent among the protesting assembly members.[37] The school headmaster controversy badly hurt Milwan. Not only did he pay out bribes to quiet his critics in the assembly, but the controversy damaged Adlina's reputation because she was allegedly involved in the extortion. At least one former assembly member believes that the scandal hurt Adlina in the district election the following year.[38]

---

[34] "MPI Labuhanbatu Dilantik, H Ramli Siagian Ketua," *Harian Sinar Indonesia Baru*, 11 April 2009.
[35] "Tiga Tahun Proyek Luncuran di Labuhanbatu Tak Ditender, 2008 Rp 158 M," *Harian Sinar Indonesia Baru*, 17 April 2009.
[36] "Dugaan Suap Mutasi Ratusan Kasek Dilapor: Polisi Menolak, Jaksa Menerima," *Labuhanbatu News*, 7 August 2008; accessed 28 July 2011.
[37] "Diwarnai Demo, DPRD Labuhanbatu Gulirkan Usulan Hak Angket Terhadap Bupati," *Harian Sinar Indonesia Baru*, 4 March 2009.
[38] Personal interview, Rantauprapat, 7 September 2010.

Routine administrative business within the district assembly also presented a pretext to criticize Milwan. In May 2009, a special committee (*Pansus, Panitia Khusus*) was tasked to investigate the executive's annual work report (LKPj). In its findings, it complained that every year the executive was late submitting a proposed budget.[39] Milwan attempted to deflect the criticism to the bureaucracy. He delivered a speech berating civil servants on National Awareness Day (*Hari Kesadaran Nasional*) in July. He blamed them for the corruption and failing to complete their duties punctually. As Milwan grew increasingly isolated, he lashed out at the one institution he still directed.[40]

In August, the assembly deliberated to pass approval of 2008 budget spending. Elya Rosa was particularly outspoken on this occasion. She objected to Milwan's decision not to re-tender rollover projects, as Ramli had in April. She called attention to budget items with large amounts of unspent funds, and, she complained that social programs were administered by the district women's organization (PKK, *Pemberdayaan Kesejahteraan Keluarga*), which was chaired by Adlina.[41]

Even the completion of one of Milwan's signature construction projects in November 2009 prompted criticism. After 13 years of delays and accidents, the district finally completed what was billed as North Sumatra's biggest and best sports complex. The opening was received with as many jeers

---

[39] "Pansus DPRD Nilai Bupati Labuhanbatu 5 Tahun Tak Tertib Ajukan RAPBD," *Harian Sinar Indonesia Baru*, 7 May 2009.

[40] "Bupati Minta PNS di Labuhanbatu Hentikan Semua Penyimpangan," *Harian Sinar Indonesia Baru*, 19 July 2009.

[41] "DPRD Labuhanbatu Soroti Belanja Daerah Tak Capai Target, F-PDIP: Anggaran Belanja Daerah Rp64 M Lebih 'Nongkrong' di Bank," *Harian Sinar Indonesia Baru*, 30 August 2009.

as cheers, however, because of the project's enormous cost totaling Rp 14.9 billion (US$1.6 million). The week it opened, cracks appeared in the back wall of the building.[42] Even with the sports complex complete, two other mega-projects were still behind schedule. A market complex and a bus terminal would not be finished before the 2010 election. On 21 May 2010, less than one month before the election, activists representing the Islamic Students Association (*Himpunan Mahasiswa Islam*) demonstrated in front of the Milwan's office to demand completion of the projects. Milwan's mega-projects, hugely profitable in terms of graft, became major sources of embarrassment that voters remembered on polling day.[43]

**Money Politics and Mobilization in the 2010 District Election**

The contest between the competing factions of the mafia was ultimately resolved by the 2010 district election. Milwan, having already served two terms, advanced Adlina together with a Pujakesuma functionary named Trisno. Fredy's faction chose to support a respected medical doctor named Tigor Siregar and the aforementioned Suhari Pane. Each side conducted campaign strategy to take greatest advantage of its organizational sources of power. Milwan's approach exemplified "money politics." He expended billions of rupiah on party nominations, voter handouts and favorable press coverage. He counted on his organizational allies—Pujakesuma and the bureaucracy—to deliver their constituencies on election

---

[42] "GOR Rantauprapat Terbesar dan Termegah di Sumut Berbiaya Rp 14,95 Kini Mulai Retak," *Harian Sinar Indonesia Baru*, 20 November 2009.

[43] "Massa HMI Demo di Kantor Bupati Labuhanbatu," *Harian Sinar Indonesia Baru*, 22 May 2010.

day. By contrast, the opposition mobilized a network of campaign volunteers that brought thousands of new voters to the polls. The strategy built on existing youth group and NGO networks and employed their activists in the organizational effort. Fredy and his youth group allies capably deployed negative campaign tactics, as well. The mobilization effort paid off for the opposition, as Tigor-Suhari won the election with 53% of the vote compared to 38% for Adlina.[44]

*Adlina's Campaign*

At the outset, Milwan and Adlina were strong favorites. Milwan began making preparations long before the official campaign season began in March 2010. Adlina's position as the chair of the women's organization allowed her to begin her campaign a year early. Since the organization administered social projects, Adlina toured villages distributing oil palm and corn seedlings, fertilizer and mosquito nets.[45] She passed out headscarves and sacks of rice marked with a heart, her campaign symbol, and accompanied by a message from *Ibu PKK* (Madame PKK).[46]

While Adlina campaigned, Milwan moved to sideline Tigor. In March 2009, Milwan removed Tigor from his position as director of Rantauprapat Public Hospital.[47] Tigor's new position was as technical advisor to the director of the district health department. While the position was a step up the

---

[44] KPU Sumut, "Daftar Perolehan Suara Calon Kepala Daerah dan Wakil Kepala Daerah Kabupaten Kota Se Sumatera Utara: Pemilukada Tanggal 16 Juni 2010," 2010.
[45] "DPRD Labuhanbatu Soroti Belanja Daerah Tak Capai Target, F-PDIP: Anggaran Belanja Daerah Rp64 M Lebih 'Nongkrong' di Bank," *Harian Sinar Indonesia Baru*, 30 August 2009.
[46] Personal interview, Rantauprapat, 16 June 2010.
[47] "Ikut Mencalon, Dr Tigor 'Dipecat' dari RSUD," *Metro Rantau*, 12 November 2009.

bureaucratic pay-scale, it commanded no real responsibility and was widely understood as a step toward retirement. Not satisfied, Milwan also tried to close Tigor's private internal medical practice but failed when he could not invalidate the office lease. Tigor made the most of the unwanted dismissal by spending the rest of the year traveling around the district performing free circumcisions. He believes the volunteer work increased his popularity and earned him votes in 2010.[48]

Milwan expected much from the bureaucracy. Civil servants in the lower levels of the bureaucracy, such as ward (*Lurah*), sub-district (*Camat*) and popularly elected village leaders (*kepala desa*), were of particular importance. They exercised *de facto* discretion over the distribution of government development programs within their jurisdictions, and thus had the capacity to politicize state patronage. Government programs, for example a free identity card processing scheme, became campaign events.[49] In addition, at least one village chief attempted to prevent Tigor and his team from entering his village.[50] Sub-district leaders influenced the composition of election logistics committees (*Panitia Pemilihan Kecamatan*, PPK), allowing them to ensure that Milwan's partisans oversaw election preparations, logistics, and vote-counting. The sub-district office was able to veto undesirable candidates because it composed a short-list of candidates from which the district election commission selected the committees.[51] However,

---

[48] Personal interview, Rantauprapat, 17 June 2010.

[49] Zainul, "Golkar Labuhanbatu Akan Minta Gubsu Tertibkan PNS Sebagai TS di Pemilukada," *Ini Medan Bung*, 31 January 2010; accessed 27 July 2011.

[50] Personal interview, Rantauprapat, 11 June 2010.

[51] Personal interview, Rantauprapat, 15 June 2010.

there is little evidence that the logistics committees made a concerted effort to manipulate the election results, despite some reports of problems at the polls.[52]

The primary tool for manipulating the bureaucracy was the executive's right to reassign civil servants. Between March and May 2009, Milwan reassigned or confirmed nearly 300 civil servants at all levels of the bureaucracy, from the district secretary (*sekretaris daerah*, *sekda*) to village heads.[53] On 15 March 2010, he fired one sub-district administrator and confirmed four more village heads.[54] By doing so, he filled the bureaucracy's most strategic positions with his supporters in time for the election. It also warned opponents that he was willing to reassign uncooperative civil servants. Many sources confirm that throughout the campaign period Milwan threatened to reassign or deactivate civil servants who attended Tigor's campaign events or expressed sympathy for his candidacy.[55]

By her own count, 28 political parties backed Adlina's campaign.[56] Some of the parties, however, limited their support to nomination only and declined to deliver their constituencies. Milwan may have anticipated the problem early in the campaign when he challenged them, saying "The success of this campaign will reflect the self-worth (*harga diri*) of the parties, because

[52] "Bagi-bagi Uang ke Pemilih, Warga Arak Lurah, Kepling dan RT ke Polres Labuhanbatu: Pilkada Labuhanbatu Diprotes," *Harian Sinar Indonesia Baru*, 17 June 2010.
[53] "Bupati Labuhanbatu Lantik 23 Pejabat Eselon II, III dan 6 Kades," *Harian Sinar Indonesia Baru*, unknown date, March or April 2009; "Bupati Labuhanbatu Lantik 256 Pejabat Eselon II, III dan IV," *Harian Sinar Indonesia Baru*, unknown date, April 2009; "Bupati Labuhanbatu Lantik Hasban Ritonga Jadi Sekdakab," *Harian Sinar Indonesia Baru*, unknown date, May 2009.
[54] "Bupati Labuhanbatu Copot Camat Bilahhulu," *Harian Sinar Indonesia Baru*, 18 March 2010.
[55] Personal interview, Rantauprapat, 17 June 2010.
[56] "Didukung 28 Parpol, Hj Adlina Layak Raih Rekor MURI," *Metro Rantau*, 12 June 2010.

the coalition supporting Adlina-Trisno is very large."[57] Party loyalties nevertheless remained divided, with Golkar as a case in point. Fredy and Elya Rosa both held local party office, Fredy as deputy chair of the board and Elya as chair of the assembly. While Fredy and Elya criticized Adlina and Milwan in the name of Golkar, provincial officers including Governor Syamsul Arifin campaigned on their behalf.[58] In all likelihood, local activists from Golkar as well as other parties felt little loyalty to Adlina because Milwan purchased the nominations by making financial donations to central and provincial party boards.

One consequence of Adlina's party strategy was that it became difficult for Tigor to fashion a coalition of parties representing 15% of the electorate. Adlina's coalition included the major parties Demokrat, Golkar, PDI-P, Welfare and Justice Party (*Partai Keadilan Sejahtera*, PKS) and National Mandate Party (*Partai Amanat Nasional*) and accounted for 35 out of 50 seats in the assembly.[59] Tigor was left to fashion a coalition around PPP that delivered the minimum of 8 assembly seats.[60] It was rumored, furthermore, that Adlina's team tried and failed to lure away one of Tigor's supporting parties at the eleventh hour.[61] If the gambit had succeeded Tigor might have been disqualified for failing to meet the nomination threshold. A corollary to the strategy was to support a third candidacy. Irfan, a retired civil

[57] "Ribuan Massa Hadiri Deklarasi Koalisi Parpol Pendukung Hj Adlina-Trisno," *Harian Waspada*, 23 March 2010.
[58] Zainul, "Golkar Labuhanbatu Akan Minta Gubsu Tertibkan PNS Sebagai TS di Pemilukada," *Ini Medan Bung*, 31 January 2010; accessed 27 July 2011; "Kampanye Terakhir Pasangan HATI di Lapangan Ika Bina: Syamsul Arifin: Dokter Tak Layak jadi Bupati," *Metro Rantau*, 14 June 2010.
[59] "Ribuan Massa Hadiri Deklarasi Koalisi Parpol Pendukung Hj Adlina-Trisno," *Harian Waspada*, 23 March 2010.
[60] "Tigor-Suhari Mendaftar Ke KPUD Labuhanbatu," *Harian Waspada*, 27 March 2010.
[61] Personal interviews, Rantauprapat, 11 June 2010; 17 June 2010.

servant, ran as an independent. He campaigned little and performed poorly at the polls. Nevertheless, had Milwan prevented Tigor from registering as a candidate, Irfan would have provided legitimacy to an uncontested election, much as "escorting candidates" (*calon pendamping*) did during the New Order.[62] Even after Tigor was nominated, Milwan contributed financially to Irfan's campaign in an effort to divide Tigor's support base.[63]

In addition to leaning on the bureaucracy and political parties, the campaign reached out to civil society via ethnic associations and the press. Of the ethnic associations, Pujakesuma was most important because Javanese comprise 44.8% of the total population in Labuhan Batu and its derivative districts.[64] However, just as Aspinall, Dettman and Warburten demonstrated with respect to Medan's 2010 election, Javanese did not vote as a single bloc.[65] The much smaller Chinese community was similarly divided, despite proclamations to the contrary.[66] Milwan paid the local newspapers to shower favorable coverage on Adlina's campaign. The partisanship of the local *Metro Rantau* was particularly bald, but it was not alone.[67] The editor of at least one major newspaper refused to run any campaign stories unless the candidate paid, as he or she might pay for advertising. Since Tigor chose to spend his

---

[62] Malley, "Regions: Centralization and Resistance," 86-7.
[63] Personal interview, Rantauprapat, 7 September 2010.
[64] Batubara, "Evaluasi Hasi Penyelenggaraan Pemilu 2009," 2.
[65] Aspinall, et al, "When Religion Trumps Ethnicity," 42.
[66] Compare "Etnis Tionghoa Dukung HATI," *Metro Rantau*, 21 May 2010; Zainul, "Penasehat PSMTI Labuhanbatu Calonkan Diri Jadi Bupati," *Ini Medan Bung*; accessed 28 July 2011.
[67] "dr Tigor: Berita Saya Terzolimi jadi Iklan Gratis Kemenangan," *Metro Rantau*, 1 September 2010.

limited funds elsewhere, his team had to discuss newsworthy topics to get coverage that reporters could file as news rather than campaign-related.[68]

The linchpin of Milwan and Adlina's campaign was the attempt to buy votes directly. Their generosity took many forms. As early as 2009, Adlina handed out money for transport to health workers, as gifts for teachers and as honorariums for campaign workers.[69] During the campaign proper, she paid motorcycle taxi drivers to escort campaign processions.[70] And like campaign teams throughout North Sumatra, her team passed out Rp 50,000 notes (about US$6) on the eve of the election in what is commonly called "the attack at dawn" (*serangan fajar*).[71]

Add all of the campaign expenditures up, and Milwan and Adlina's campaign cost an extraordinary amount of money. Local observers enjoy speculating as to the amount, with guesses ranging wildly from Rp 10 billion to 100 billion (US$1.1 million-11 million). Regardless of the actual amount, it seems clear that Milwan and Adlina outspent Tigor in a classic campaign of money politics. From party nominations to vote-buying, they believed their money would purchase support. The case would confirm Hadiz's criticism that

[68] Personal interview, Rantauprapat, 31 August 2010.

[69] "Ketua Penggerak PKK Labuhanbatu Serahkan Uang Transport Kepada Ratusan Kader Poyandu se-Bilah Hilir," *Harian Sinar Indonesia Baru*, unknown date, September or November 2009; "Ketua TP PKK: Jangan Sampai Labuhanbatu Dipimpin Preman," *Harian Sinar Indonesia Baru*, unknown date, November 2009; Zainul, "Hj Adlina Milwan Bagi-bagi Duit di Acara HUT Guru," *Ini Medan Bung*; accessed 28 July 2011; "Adelina (sic) T Milwan Bagi-bagi Duit kepada 1.500 Anggota Tim Sukses di Bilah Hilir Labuhanbatu," *Harian Sinar Indonesia Baru*, unknown date, August 2009.

[70] "Ribuan Abang Betor Rantauprapat Ikut Pasang Taruhan Piala Dunia, Uangnya dari Upah Kampanye?" *Harian Sinar Indonesia Baru*, 14 June 2010.

[71] "Tigor Siregar-Suhari Pane Unggul Di Labuhanbatu," *Harian Waspada*, 17 June 2010.

Indonesian democracy is vulnerable to elite capture through money politics, except that in this case, Adlina lost.[72]

*Tigor's Campaign*

Tigor's campaign strategy focused on face to face contact between the candidates, campaign volunteers and voters. In this way, the team attempted to bypass the local press, which Milwan had ensured would favor Adlina.[73] Tigor and his running mate Suhari stumped, but the number of people they encountered touring was naturally limited. To extend the message, the campaign team developed a large network of volunteers. The goal was to recruit 20 volunteers in every village and ward in the entire district. The campaign team placed five operatives in every sub-district for the purpose of recruiting volunteers. At the end of the campaign, Tigor boasted that 12,000 volunteers had registered with his team and worked on the campaign.[74] These volunteers became responsible for the campaign in their respective villages. They arranged logistics and extended invitations to the candidates to make a campaign stop in the village.[75]

Tigor's plan to establish chapters of campaign volunteers in every town and village followed the model of North Sumatra's youth organizations, and Tigor's campaign team interpenetrated those organizations. The most important of them was Ramli's MPI, but members of other organizations such as Youth Force for Indonesian Renewal (*Angkatan Muda Pembaharuan*

---

[72] Vedi Hadiz, "Power and Politics in North Sumatra: The Uncompleted *Reformasi*," in *Local Power and Politics in Indonesia*, Aspinall and Fealy, eds.: 119-131.
[73] Personal interview, Rantauprapat, 11 June 2010.
[74] Personal interview, Rantauprapat, 17 June 2010.
[75] Personal interview, Rantauprapat, 11 June 2010.

*Indonesia*) and the Labuhan Batu Batak Youth Forum (*Forum Pemuda Batak Labuhanbatu*) also cooperated with Ramli and Fredy in support of Tigor's campaign.[76] It is very likely that the members of youth organizations were the operatives recruiting village volunteers. However, their work was easier because Tigor and Suhari were well-known in Labuhan Batu's villages because of their charitable work there, Tigor as a doctor and Suhari as a farmer's advocate.

In the villages, Tigor presented a populist agenda.[77] He talked about improving health services and education, and his bread-and-butter issue was identity cards. He insisted that the bureaucracy should process these free of charge and promised that if elected he would see to it that they were.[78] The clever promise appealed to all classes of voters and indirectly criticized the lower level bureaucrats upon whom Adlina campaign's depended, since village and ward leaders were the ones who processed identity cards and collected processing fees.

Tigor's backers, Fredy, Ramli and their associates, also waged an aggressively negative campaign. One early attack against Adlina accused her of submitting a false high school diploma to the district election commission.[79] All executive candidates must hold a high school diploma, so the allegation simultaneously challenged her right to run for office and defamed her character. The rumor claimed that Adlina married Milwan at a young age and

[76] Personal interview, Rantuaprapat, 31 August 2010; "Tigor Siregar-Suhari Pane Unggul Di Labuhanbatu," *Harian Waspada*, 17 June 2010.
[77] Zulkifli, "Mengawal Jargon Perubahan Pemerintahan ala dr Tigor-Suhari," *Metro Rantau*, 2 September 2010.
[78] Personal interview, Rantauprapat, 17 June 2010.
[79] "Ratusan Warga Unjuk Rsa (sic) Minta KPU Labuhanbatu Benar-benar Verifikasi Berkas Balon Bupati," *Harian Sinar Indonesia Baru*, 13 April 2010.

as a result failed to complete middle or high school. Ramli himself traveled to Adlina's home province of West Sumatra to interview the principal at her former middle school and returned claiming to have proof that Adlina's diploma was a forgery.[80] The attack succeeded. Even after the election commission confirmed the authenticity of Adlina's diploma, doubt remained in the minds of many voters about Adlina's qualifications for public office.[81] In addition, the opposition taunted Adlina by hanging insulting banners around the district, some of which were "signed" with Fredy's name. One read, "Thank you Mrs. Adlina for the rice and money, but we still prefer Tigor."[82] Finally, Fredy and Ramli's thugs monitored the campaign activities of Adlina's team, and on election day they detained a sub-district and a ward administrator and accused them of distributing money during the "attack at dawn."[83]

The election results proved that Tigor, Suhari, Fredy, Elya Rosa, Ramli and the others successfully mobilized voters to oppose Adlina and Milwan. In 2005, 83,000 people voted against Milwan in the part of Labuhan Batu that was not partitioned in 2009.[84] In 2010, Tigor's ticket received over 100,000 votes, meaning that his campaign attracted almost 28,000 voters who had not previously opposed Milwan.[85] Many of them were first time voters, as 21,000

---

[80] Personal interview, Rantauprapat, 31 August 2010.
[81] Personal interview, Rantauprapat, 7 September 2010.
[82] "Cabup Labuhan Batu 'Perang Baliho,'" *Metro Rantau*, 31 May 2010.
[83] "Bagi-bagi Uang ke Pemilih, Warga Arak Lurah, Kepling dan RT ke Polres Labuhanbatu: Pilkada Labuhanbatu Diprotes," *Harian Sinar Indonesia Baru*, 17 June 2010.
[84] KPU Labuhanbatu, "Lampiran 1: Rekapitulasi Hasil Penghitungan Suara Pilkada 2005," in *Laporan: Penyelenggaraan Pemilihan 2005*: Appendix 1.
[85] KPU Labuhanbatu, "Rekapitulasi Jumlah Pemilih, TPS dan Surat Suara," 18 June 2010.

more people voted in 2010 than 2005. The remainder was likely swing voters who abandoned Milwan. Adlina lost 16,000 votes compared to his 2005 total.

As successful as the mobilization effort was on election day, it placed great strain on the opposition coalition afterwards. Campaign promises had raised hopes so high, and the opposition encompassed so many diverse groups, that when Tigor and Suhari were inaugurated disillusionment set in almost immediately. The criticism focused on the incompatible interests of the Fredy and the business contractors, on the one hand, who intended to reconstitute the mafia, and the villagers, volunteers and voters, on the other, who hoped for efficient implementation of Tigor's populist programs.

Tigor's fate was tied to Fredy and the mafia because he owed his position to them. The opening ceremony for Milwan's mega-project, *Padang Bulan* Bus Terminal, illustrated the power of the "new" mafia. After 12 years of construction, the new facility would increase district revenues, improve traffic flow and beautify Rantauprapat. The opening was the most important event of Tigor's young administration. Having been humiliated by the campaign against his wife, Milwan did not attend though he had managed the project for years. Instead, Tigor and deputy Suhari proudly presided. Standing beside them were Fredy, Elya Rosa and Ramli.[86]

However, it is unlikely that the mafia will maintain such a united image for long. Having mobilized so many volunteers, it will be very difficult for Tigor to satisfy all of his constituents. The first cracks appeared on 1 October 2010, when a scandal erupted because Tigor was accused of pressuring the oceans and fisheries agency (*Diskanla*, *Dinas Perikanan dan*

[86] "Terminal Padang Bulan Resmi Beroperasi," *Metro Rantau*, 3 September 2010.

*Kelautan*) to award a project tender to one of his campaign supporters.[87] Two of his former admirers angrily responded by comparing Tigor to Milwan.[88] Others whispered about Tigor's untrustworthy advisors, evoking the metaphor of a manipulative steward (*panglima talam*) who pays lip service to the lord but manages the estate in a self-serving fashion.[89] Milwan's mafia collapsed when state patronage proved insufficient to satisfy both him and Fredy. While the spoils of office have remained constant, the pressure on the mafia is greater than ever because the new administration must answer to 10,000 campaign volunteers who mobilized to defeat Milwan. It will be extremely difficult to maintain such a large coalition.

[87] "Bupati Intervensi Kadiskanla Minta Koleganya Dimenangkan," *Metro Rantau*, 1 October 2010.
[88] "Dr Tigor Setali Tiga Uang dengan HT Milwan," *Metro Rantau*, 2 October 2010; "Tigor-Suhari Dituding Berbohong," *Metro Rantau*, 13 October 2010.
[89] "Beri Kesempatan Bagi Tigor-Suhari," *Harian Waspada*, 21 October 2010.

# PART THREE

## Tapanuli Selatan: A Mafia against a Machine

Tapanuli Selatan's politics during the post-reform era illustrate the full life cycle, so to speak, of a local mafia. The case shows how decentralization reform allowed mafias to emerge, and how counter-reform contributed to their decline and eventual eclipse by a party machine. Shortly after the collapse of the New Order, a "timber mafia" coalesced in Tapanuli Selatan by monopolizing the lucrative logging and plantation concessions that Law No. 22/1999 appeared to place under the authority of local governments. The mafia came to exercise a great deal of influence over many local institutions, particularly the executive and legislative branches of government, the judiciary, the election commission and Golkar's district chapter. Even after national legislation revoked local authority to manage forests, the mafia remained powerful without its *raison d'etre* because it retained its institutional allies. In this way, it resisted the encroachment of the Golkar machine for several years before finally succumbing. In order to prevail, the machine backed subdivision of Tapanuli Selatan district in order to marginalize the mafia's voting base while mobilizing its own constituency in Sipirok town.

The district is among North Sumatra's most remote, rural and poorest. Despite rich forests, mineral deposits and plantations, Tapanuli Selatan's per capita income remains low, at Rp 7.2 million (US$790) in 2007.[1] Foreign and national firms dominate these main industries, leaving little opportunity for local business to develop. Consequently, social organizations are not as well

[1] BPS Sumut, "Sumatera Utara in Figures 2009," Table 11.3.3.

established as elsewhere in the province. Labor organizations are weak and the youth groups have few outposts in rural areas. Customary associations and clan affiliations are the most influential social networks.

District geography extends from the highlands of the Bukit Barisan mountains to the coastal lowlands on the shores of the Indian Ocean, and agricultural products match the topography in variety. The highlands are cultivated in wet rice, the intermediate zones in rubber and the lowlands in palm oil. Before it was divided into three districts in 2007, Tapanuli Selatan ranked among the top producers in the province of each of these commodities due to its enormous size.[2] But natural resources are the prize of the economy. Before 2007, the district had the most forest land in North Sumatra by far.[3] Besides timber, forested areas also contain gold deposits as well as endangered orangutans, but both the forests and fauna are disappearing fast.

The history of plantation labor in Tapanuli Selatan is quite different from Labuhan Batu or Serdang Bedagai because large-scale estates production there started much later. The laboring population is composed of recent migrants from Java, Nias and Tapanuli and it is organized differently than in the traditional plantation belt. On many estates, workers participate in a cooperative whereby each family receives two hectares of land on the condition that it sells its produce only to the concession holder. Because the estates industry was not yet established at the time, it is likely that anti-

[2] For rice, see BPS Sumut, “Sumatera Utara in Figures 2009,” Table 5.1.3. For plantations, see Disbun Sumut, “Rekapitulasi Luas Areal dan Produksi Komoditi Kelapa Sawit,” and “Rekapitulasi Luas Areal dan Produksi Komoditi Karet.”

[3] Surat Keputusan Menhut No. 44/Menhut-II/2005.

communist violence during 1965-66 was less bloody in Tapanuli Selatan than along the east coast.

## Decentralization and the Rise of the Timber Mafia

In several publications, John McCarthy has described the operations of "'timber mafias'" composed of "clientelist coalitions" that manage lucrative logging activities in forested districts of Indonesia.[4] During the dying days of the New Order, a mafia in Aceh Tenggara district linked the executive with "forestry staff working for the National Park, police (*Polres*) and army personnel (*Kodim*), local government officials, the judiciary and local religious leaders (*imam*)."[5] In the years immediately following decentralization reform, "district actors and administrators had exceptional opportunities to gain benefits" from timber resources because they gained authority to grant logging permits and land concessions.[6] In Central Kalimantan's Barito Selatan district, the executive issued logging and transit permits to political allies and wealthy logging conglomerates. Members of the district assembly, journalists and NGOs accepted pay-offs from loggers, as did a host of law enforcement agencies, including the police, the military and forestry officials. In addition, an estimated 60 assembly members were "directly involved in timber enterprises."[7]

---

[4] John McCarthy, "Power and Interest on Sumatra's Rainforest Frontier: Clientelist Coalitions, Illegal Logging and Conservation in the Alas Valley," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 33.1 (February 2002): 93.
[5] Ibid., 94.
[6] John McCarthy, "Sold down the river: Renegotiating public power over nature in Central Kalimantan," in *Renegotiating Boundaries: Local Politics in Post-Suharto Indonesia*, Henk Schulte Nordholt and Gerry van Klinken, eds. (Leiden: KITLV Press, 2007): 153.
[7] Ibid., 168-9.

Evidence suggests that a similar mafia was active in Tapanuli Selatan at the same time. Certainly timber represented a very valuable resource present in the district. Shane Barter reported that in North Sumatra, logging concessions granted by the district government increased "a thousand fold" after 1998 and he identified Saleh Harahap, executive of Tapanuli Selatan, as a primary culprit.[8] North Sumatra's most sensational illegal logging case commenced during this period in Tapanuli Selatan when D.L. Sitorus opportunistically took possession of tens of thousands of hectares of forest reserve in 1998.[9] Taking advantage of the breakdown in central authority, he bypassed the Forest Ministry and negotiated directly with traditional leaders who claimed to exercise customary rights (*hak ulayat*) over the land. He converted the forest to palm oil, attracting a workforce to clear and plant by giving 2 Ha of land to members of a cooperative (*Koperasi Bukit Harapan*, Mount Hope Cooperative) which sold exclusively to him. The cooperative cultivated; Sitorus obtained documentation of land tenure.[10] This he procured locally, in all likelihood dealing directly with district level officials at the local forestry agency (*Dinas Kehutanan*) and the national land tenure board (*Badan Pertanahan Nasional*, BPN), and, of course, with the district executive.[11]

According to McCarthy, district officials abruptly lost their power to regulate logging in 2002. He cites the newly autonomous police force and a

---

[8] Shane Barter, "The Dangers of Decentralization: Clientelism, the State, & Nature in a Democratic Indonesia," *Federal Governance* 1:6 (Winter 2008): 10-11.
[9] Johan Budi, Agus Riyanto and Bambang Soed, "Ada Orang Kuat di Torganda?" *Majalah Tempo*, 3 April 2000;
[10] Maria Hasugian and Hambali Batubara, "Menjerat Si Raja Sawit," *Majalah Tempo*, 12 September 2005.
[11] Eva Komandjaja, "Prosecutors arrest North Sumatra plantation tycoon," *The Jakarta Post*, 1 September 2005.

government regulation (*Peraturan Pemerintah* No. 34/2002) that restored authority over timber permits and concessions to the Ministry of Forestry as the two main causes. As a result of these developments, district governments in Central Kalimantan relinquished control of timber rents to the provincial police and numerous district officials faced prosecution in the provincial courts.[12] The provincial police, attorney general's office and the Ministry of Forestry similarly initiated a series of high profile illegal logging cases in North Sumatra. In 2005, the attorney general charged D.L. Sitorus with corruption and illegally converting forest land.[13] The following year, Adelin Lis, whose family owned several companies with vast concessions in Tapanuli Tengah, Tapanuli Selatan and Mandailing Natal districts, was accused of logging Batang Gadis National Park.[14] And in 2005, the Minister of Forestry, M.S. Kaban, named Saleh Harahap an illegal logging suspect shortly before the latter's death.[15]

**Stalemate: The 2005 District Elections**

Already strained because of the pressure from provincial law enforcement officials and the Ministry of Forestry, the mafia collapsed completely during the 2005 direct district elections. The incumbent executive, the chair of the assembly and the district secretary—all erstwhile allies—declared candidacies during an extremely contentious campaign. D.L. Sitorus,

---

[12] John McCarty, "Sold down the river," 169-172.
[13] L.R. Baskoro, Danto, Agung Wijaya and Hambali Batubara, "Penjarahan Kayu: Sewindu untuk Sang Penantang," *Majalah Tempo*, 7 August 2006.
[14] Ramidi, Hambali Batubara and Maria Hasugian, "Setelah Hutan Habis Ditebang," *Majalah Tempo*, 18 September 2006.
[15] Edi Irawan and Tom, "Bupati dan Anaknya Jadi Tersangka Illegal Logging," *indosiar.com*, unknown date, December 2005; accessed 8 March 2011.

arguably the most important businessman in the district, supported yet another candidate.[16] Thus four out of ten candidates who registered with the local election commission originated from the timber mafia.

The chair of the assembly, Bachrum Harahap, was the favorite to win the election and rebuild the coalition. A real estate broker among other things, Bachrum understood the value of land concessions. He grew rich during his time in the assembly and developed a loyal network of followers by directing projects to his friends.[17] He also chaired the local chapter of Golkar, an important position because the party dominated both branches of local government. The executive, Saleh Harahap, had long been a party member. In the assembly, Golkar held 14 out of 45 seats after winning nearly 30% of the vote in the 2004 legislative elections. By comparison, the second leading party, PPP, controlled only 6 seats.[18]

Bachrum's leadership of Golkar seemed to assure him of the party's nomination, so Saleh Harahap sought out other parties to endorse his candidacy. He asked his district secretary, Rahudman Harahap, to approach PDI-P to secure its nomination. The opportunistic secretary deceived Saleh and persuaded PDI-P to support himself instead.[19] As a result, when Saleh registered with the election committee, it disqualified him and announced Rahudman as the rightful PDI-P candidate. Saleh died a few months later, but

---

[16] The candidate, not coincidently, was a district-level official at the national land tenure board (BPN).

[17] Personal interview, Gunung Tua, 27 October 2010.

[18] Komisi Pemilihan Umum Tapanuli Selatan, "Daftar Nama Pasangan Calon Kepala Daerah dan Wakil Kepala Daerah yang Terdaftar di KPU Kabupaten Tapanuli Selatan," Divisi Peserta Pemilu dan Pencalonan, 8 April 2005.

[19] Heru Susilo Prayetno, "Rahudman Harahap tak layak Pj walikota Medan," *Waspada Online*, 29 June 2009; accessed 8 March 2011.

not before exacting revenge. He reported Rahudman to the provincial police for embezzling civil servant bonuses. The case did not prevent Rahudman from running for executive because it took years to investigate, but it did illustrate how acrimoniously the mafia collapsed.[20]

Even though Saleh conceded Golkar's support, Bachrum still almost lost the nomination. The threat came not from local rivals but from Golkar's central and provincial leadership. That leadership preferred a pairing of Herry Siregar, the incumbent deputy executive, and Chaidir Ritonga, Golkar's deputy treasurer for the province. In addition to holding a provincial party position, Chaidir was the son-in-law of senior Golkar politician Burhanuddin Napitupulu, who at the time was Sumatra area coordinator for the Golkar Central Leadership Board (*Dewan Pimpinan Pusat*) in Jakarta.[21] The leadership knew that Bachrum would never sign a nomination letter for a rival, so it also moved to sack Bachrum from his position as district party chair.

When Bachrum realized that the party convention would not give him the nomination, he acted quickly to thwart Golkar's intentions. At 8pm on Wednesday, 6 April 2005, two days before the registration deadline, he appeared at the election commission's office in the town of Padang Sidimpuan and registered as the candidate for Golkar. His paperwork was in order and he presented all the required signatures: from himself as party chair, from the party secretary, and from both candidates on the ticket, himself and Tongku Palit Hasibuan.[22]

---

[20]Budi Warsito, "Aspidsus Kejati Sumut Membantah: Kejagung Kembalikan Surat Izin Rahudman," *Tribun Medan*, 26 February 2011.

[21] "Chaidir Ritonga: Anggota Dewan Bukan Pencari Kerja," *Harian Sumut Pos*, 30 May 2010.

[22] KPU Tapsel, "Daftar Nama Pasangan Calon," 8 April 2005.

Two days later, a delegation from Medan came to register the convention's choice for the Golkar nomination. They presented a letter recalling Bachrum from his position as district party chair as well as all the required signatures based on the new party hierarchy. At first, the election commission was reluctant to accept the nomination because Golkar had already submitted one nomination, but the delegation persuaded it to process both nominations and promised to await the outcome of the candidate verification process. It was a decision the election commissioners came to regret.[23]

After the verification process, the election commission declared Bachrum the legitimate Golkar candidate based on a technicality: the letter sacking him was not signed by Golkar's provincial chairperson.[24] Instead, the deputy chair had signed the letter because the chair was abroad visiting Mecca for the rite of *Umroh* at the time of the convention. The matter was not settled so easily, however. Herry Siregar and Chaidir Ritonga successfully appealed the decision to the state administrative court (*Pengadilan Tata Usaha Negara*) in Medan, which upheld the validity of the letter. This meant that the election commission still had to choose between two Golkar nominated candidates.

Election regulations stipulated that in the event that one party nominated more than one candidate, the party's Central Board had the final authority to designate the candidate. At the advice of the provincial election commission, the election commission sent a letter to Golkar on 2 May 2005

---

[23] Personal interview, Padang Sidimpuan, 21 October 2010.

[24] KPU Tapsel, "Laporan Perkembangan dan Permasalahan Penyelenggaraan Pemilihan Kepala Daerah dan Wakil Kepala Daerah, Kabupaten Tapanuli Selatan," Divisi Hukum dan Hubungan antar Lembaga, April 2005.

requesting clarification,[25] and a few days later the commission sent a delegation of three to Jakarta to meet with the central board face to face. The board declared that it supported Herry Siregar and Chaidir Ritonga as Golkar's candidates in Tapsel. Upon returning to Padang Sidimpuan, the chair of the election commission, Erwin Syarifuddin Harahap, and one member, Fitri Leniwati Harahap, signed a letter declaring Herry and Chaidir as Golkar's rightful nominee.[26]

At this point, the election commission split. The three commissioners who had not signed the letter called a plenary meeting at which they used their majority to reach a number of decisions. First, they declared the letter invalid because it had not been previously agreed upon in a plenary session.[27] Second, they repudiated the letter they had sent requesting clarification from Golkar's central board.[28] Third, they voted to endorse Bachrum as the Golkar candidate. Fourth, they voted to replace the chair with one of their own, Mustar Edi Hutasuhut. Finally, they resolved to press charges of forgery and misconduct against Erwin and Fitri for their actions in support of Herry and Chaidir's candidacy.[29]

News reports, local gossip, and the absurdity of some of the decisions taken by the group of three election commissioners all suggested that they

---

[25] KPU Tapsel, "Surat Nomor: 270/ 436 /KPU-TS/V/05, Perihal: Permintaan Klarifikasi Calon Kepala Daerah dan Wakil Kepala Daerah dari DPD Partai Golkar Kabupaten Tapanuli Selatan," 2 May 2005.

[26] "Buntut Keluarnya SK Nomor 22 Tahun 2005 Soal Perubahan Balon KDH Golkar: KPUD Tapsel Pecah, Ketuanya Sering Diteror," *Harian Sumut Pos*, 18 May 2005.

[27] Ibid.

[28] KPU Tapsel, "Berita Acara No: 31/KPU-TS/V/05 Tentang Surat Nomor 270/436/KPU-TS/V/05 tanggal 02 Mei 2005 perihal Permintaan Klarifikasi Calon Kepala Daerah dan Wakil Depala Daerah dari DPD Partai GOLKAR Kabupaten Tapanuli Selatan," 11 May 2005.

[29] Personal interview, Padang Sidimpuan, 21 October 2010.

were biased in favor of Bachrum.[30] Whether or not they were bribed, their loyalty to Bachrum paid off as a wise career choice. Two of them accompanied him to the new district Padang Lawas Utara, where in 2008 Bachrum became the first elected district executive. M. Aman Siregar joined the election commission there[31] while Amril Hakim Harahap received a civil service appointment in the education agency (*Dinas Pendidikan*).[32] Mustar Edi, meanwhile, retained his newly acquired position as chair of Tapanuli Selatan's election commission for a second term that commenced in December 2008. By contrast, Bachrum's opponents Erwin and Fitri retired from public life at the conclusion of their terms. Fitri started an NGO that assists battered women and Erwin opened a restaurant.[33]

Bachrum reportedly punished opponents as effectively as he rewarded supporters, and Mustar Edi, M. Aman and Amril Hakim may have been motivated by fear as much as ambition. Despite pressure from the provincial election commission, they refused to drop the charges against Erwin and Fitri. The trial began after the election and after one hearing Erwin and Fitri were held in contempt of court for failing to appear. They had done so on the advice of their lawyer. They spent the duration of the trial, nine weeks, in jail. They were eventually found guilty of forgery, the lesser charge, and sentenced to time served.[34] The vindictive nature of the charges and the harshness of the contempt finding again suggest that the court was biased in favor of Bachrum.

---

[30] "Konflik Jelang Pesta Rakyat," *Media Indonesia*, 6 May 2005.
[31] "Pelantikan 23 KPU Kabupaten/Kota, 5 Menyusul," *Berita Sore*, 28 October 2008; accessed 31 July 2011.
[32] "Anggota KPU Tapsel Tinggal 4 Orang," *Waspada Online*, 27 June 2008; accessed 31 July 2011.
[33] Personal interview, Padang Sidimpuan, 21 October 2010.
[34] Ibid.

Throughout the nomination process, Bachrum demonstrated his influence over local institutions. Within the district branch of Golkar, he sidelined the incumbent district executive and persuaded the party secretary to cooperate with him to seize the nomination. The district election commission took his side against the recommendations of the provincial commission. It is likely that he influenced the decisions taken by the local court. With his local influence, he outsmarted and outmuscled the provincial and central Golkar leadership and seized the nomination.

Despite his success, Bachrum lost the election. On election day, 27 June 2005, he finished second with 22% of the vote. Ongku Hasibuan, a mining engineer nominated by PKS and *Partai Kebangkitan Bangsa* (National Awakening Party), won the election by a comfortable margin with 33%.[35] Local observers have little doubt that the nomination fight cost Bachrum the election. During the controversy, Golkar activists drifted away to other candidates.[36] Bachrum lost time on the campaign trail. The dispute cast doubt on the legitimacy of his candidacy as well as the election itself. The week before the election, no less a person than Agung Laksono, Golkar national deputy chair and chair of the National assembly (*Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat*, DPR), publicly declared the Tapanuli Selatan election “legally flawed.”[37] Golkar’s internal struggle over the 2005 nomination culminated in a draw, with both sides losing. Bachrum prevented the central leadership from

[35] KPU Sumut, “Rekapitulasi Jumlah Pemilih, PPK PPS, TPS, Dan Hasil Perolehan Suara Masing-Masing Pasangan Calon dalam Pemilihan Kepala Daerah Kabupaten/Kota Tahun 2005 di Provinsi Sumatera Utara (Tahap 1),” no date; accessed at www.kpusumut.org, 13 April 2010.
[36] “Konflik Jelang Pesta Rakyat,” *Media Indonesia*, 6 May 2005.
[37] “Mantan Ketua KPUD: Pilkada Tapsel Cacat Hukum,” *Harian Waspada*, 29 June 2005.

nominating its preferred candidate, while the central leadership prevented Bachrum from winning the election.

**The Mafia Counterattacks: Subdividing the District**

Following his election loss, Bachrum immediately set to work drawing the lines for Tapanuli Selatan's next political battle. During the lame duck period before Ongku's inauguration, Bachrum used his influence as chair of the district assembly to pass a proposal to subdivide Tapanuli Selatan.[38] The proposal purported to fulfill the promise of a 1992 resolution to divide Tapanuli Selatan into four independent districts and a municipality.[39] Bachrum's plan called for the creation of three new districts, called Angkola Sipirok, Padang Lawas and Tapanuli Selatan.

Bachrum's bill proposed to make Tapanuli Selatan, where Ongku would administer, smaller and poorer than the other two districts. Of Tapanuli Selatan's 28 sub-districts, Angkola Sipirok was to administer 11, Padang Lawas 10 and Tapanuli Selatan 7. Similarly, at 140,978, Tapanuli Selatan's proposed population was roughly half the size of Angkola Sipirok's and two-thirds that of Padang Lawas. Furthermore, the sub-districts allocated to Tapanuli Selatan were more remote and less developed. For example, they contained only 17% of the original district's elementary schools, 20% of its road infrastructure and 7% of its cell phone coverage.[40] Most importantly, the proposal reserved much of Tapanuli Selatan's most productive plantation land

---

[38] S Togi Ritonga, "Wujudkan Pemekaran, Drs Bachrum Harahap Pantas Pimpin Paluta (Bagian I)," *Harian Mandiri*, 8 September 2008; accessed 11 March 2011.
[39] Chaidir Ritonga, "Akhirnya Tapsel Mekar," *Waspada Online*, 24 July 2007; accessed 19 July 2011.
[40] Andy Riza Hidayat, "Menunggu Pemekaran Tapanuli Selatan?" *Kompas*, 20 April 2007.

to Padang Lawas district, where Bachrum's base of support resided. Bachrum had intentions to govern this new district, and in 2008 he would become its executive after it had been realized with a slightly different name, Padang Lawas Utara.[41]

After Bachrum's proposal passed in Tapanuli Selatan's assembly on 28 July 2005, it quickly worked its way through the North Sumatra provincial government. Once the provincial assembly approved it, Governor Rudolf Pardede endorsed it on 29 November 2005 and sent it to Jakarta, where Agung Laksono and the rest of the national assembly took a full year to write it into a bill.[42] The respite gave Bachrum's opponents an opportunity to plan a counterattack.

When President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono placed 16 district subdivision bills on the agendas of the national assembly, Ministry of Home Affairs and Ministry of Justice and Human Rights (*Kementerian Hukum dan Hak Asasi Manusia*), Ongku seized the opportunity to submit an alternative.[43] On 1 February 2007 he wrote the president to explain that if it passed, Bachrum's plan would at once impoverish the district named Tapanuli Selatan and burden it with the added responsibility of financially and administratively supporting the new districts until they became fully autonomous.[44] As a solution he proposed that Tapanuli Selatan administer the eleven sub-districts

---

[41] "Bachrum Harahap/Riskon Unggul di Paluta, Basyrah Lubis/Ali Sutan Harahap Unggul di Palas," *Harian Sinar Indonesia Baru*, 22 October 2008.

[42] S Togi Ritonga, "Wujudkan Pemekaran, Drs Bachrum Harahap Pantas Pimpin Paluta (Bagian I)," *Harian Mandiri*, 8 September 2008; accessed 11 March 2011.

[43] He did so in Presidential Letter (*Surat President*) No. R.01/Pres/01/2007 dated 2 January 2007.

[44] S Togi Ritonga, "Wujudkan Pemekaran, Drs Bachrum Harahap Pantas Pimpin Paluta (Bagian I)," *Harian Mandiri*, 8 September 2008; accessed 11 March 2011.

that corresponded to Bachrum's Angkola Sipirok. Padang Lawas would administer not ten sub-districts but seven, and the remaining three would shift to the third district, called Barumun Raya under Ongku's plan.[45] These three sub-districts were chosen carefully. Two of them, Simangambat and Barumum Tengah, held vast tracts of D.L. Sitorus' palm oil plantations. The third was the location of Ongku's hometown.

In addition to lobbying national politicians, Ongku campaigned locally for his plan. The topic became a subject of heated debate on the streets and in the newspapers. One outspoken supporter of Ongku's plan was Chaidir Ritonga, the provincial Golkar functionary who was Golkar's choice for deputy district executive in 2005.[46] The final step in Ongku's campaign was to push the revision through Bachrum's district assembly.

Ongku's strategy to accomplish this difficult task was legislative misdirection. His supporters in PKS announced in the local press that because of the subdivision debate, the assembly was hopelessly behind on its routine tasks. They complained that Bachrum was focusing too much on the subdivision bill at the expense of his other responsibilities as assembly chair.[47] Their statements set out the justification for calling a special meeting to create a new assembly agenda. When Bachrum was away in Jakarta, probably sometime in early April 2007, Khoiruddin Siregar, one of the deputy chairs of the assembly, called a consulting committee meeting (*Panitia Musyawarah*) that had the authority to set a new agenda. At the meeting, Khoiruddin and the

---

[45] Ibid.

[46] "Intelektual, Mahasiswa Dukung Kab. Induk Di Angkola Sipirok," *Harian Waspada*, 26 March 2007.

[47] S Togi Ritonga, "Wujudkan Pemekaran, Drs Bachrum Harahap Pantas Pimpin Paluta (Bagian II)," *Harian Mandiri*, 17 September 2008; accessed 11 March 2011.

PKS assembly members inserted the revised proposal into the agenda by a vote of 12 to 9.[48]

On Friday, 20 April 2007, the assembly met to discuss the proposed revision. Bachrum and the other Golkar assembly members were furious. Hundreds of protesters assembled outside, but violence broke out inside the assembly chambers. Before the meeting was called to order, Syarifuddin Hasibuan of Golkar punched Edi Hasan Nasution of PKS in the face. Syarifuddin overturned tables, shattered glass and broke ashtrays. His actions made the chambers unusable, and the session transferred to the conference room at the district executive's office. Under tight security, 26 out of 45 assembly members attended. Khoiruddin presided; Bachrum and many of his supporters were absent.[49]

The attending assembly members settled the matter the same day in a marathon session. They established a special committee to discuss the revision, which recommended approval by a vote of 13 to 6. All six Golkar members on the committee voted against. The assembly immediately put the committee's recommendation to a vote. It passed Ongku's revision and declared all previous subdivision plans null and void. By the end of the day, the revised bill was on its way to the Governor's office in Medan. He promptly approved it and by Tuesday, 24 April 2007, it had been forwarded to

[48] "Usulan Pemekaran Tapsel Direvisi," *Harian Waspada*, 24 April 2007.
[49] "Buk…Bak…Buk, Anggota DPRD Tapsel Baku Hantam," *Harian Sinar Indonesia Baru*, 21 April 2007; "Paripurna Revisi Usulan Pemekaran Tapsel Ricuh, Anggota Dewan Dari PKS Dibogem," *Harian Waspada*, 21 April 2007.

the Ministry of Home Affairs which would prepare it for discussion in the national assembly in early May.[50]

Ongku's campaign to revise the subdivision bill required a high degree of cooperation from all levels of Indonesia's government. After it passed the district assembly, the bill still needed prompt cooperation from the Governor and Ministry of Home Affairs to reach the DPR in time for the session scheduled to discuss partition bills.[51] The speed at which the bill passed through the bureaucracy is all the more remarkable when compared to the much longer amount time it took Bachrum's bill to make the same journey.[52] The revision effort was carefully premeditated and widely supported by district, provincial and central officials.

Despite Bachrum's affiliation to Golkar, the revision received as much support from the lawmakers in the DPR as it had from bureaucratic officials. The assembly commission responsible for deliberating new districts considered both versions of the bill and preferred Ongku's.[53] The draft it submitted to the floor of the assembly followed Ongku's plan but for one concession: Bachrum was able to add Simangambat sub-district, which was the center of D.L. Sitorus' palm oil operations, to Padang Lawas Utara, the district he would eventually administer.[54]

---

[50] "Usulan Pemekaran Tapsel Direvisi," *Harian Waspada*, 24 April 2007.
[51] "Hari Ini Pemekaran Angkola Sipirok dan Padang Lawas Kembali Dibahas di DPR," *Harian Sinar Indonesia Baru*, 15 May 2007.
[52] "Hasil Paripurna Pemekaran Tapsel Telah Disampaikan di DPR RI dan Depdagri," *Harian Sinar Indonesia Baru*, 10 May 2007.
[53] "Pemekaran Padang Lawas Dan Padang Lawas Utara Diparipurnakan Hari Ini," *Harian Sinar Indonesia Baru*, 17 July 2007.
[54] S Togi Ritonga, "Wujudkan Pemekaran, Drs Bachrum Harahap Pantas Pimpin Paluta (Bagian II)," *Harian Mandiri*, 17 September 2008; accessed 11 March 2011.

The defeat of his district subdivision proposal further diminished Bachrum's influence in Tapanuli Selatan. His ally in the assembly, Syarifuddin, was sentenced to six months in prison for his violent actions in the assembly chambers.[55] Padang Lawas Utara was the smallest of the three new districts. When Bachrum became district executive there the following year, he resigned his position as chair of Tapanuli Selatan's assembly and removed himself from a formal role in district politics. After 2005, he never recovered his position as Golkar district chair, although he did become a deputy area coordinator for the provincial Golkar board.[56] The partition controversy confirmed the impression of 2005. Bachrum's local influence was subordinate to the political designs of provincial and central figures.

**The Mafia Defeated: The 2010 District Elections**

The 2010 district elections continued the pattern. In this election, the Golkar ticket defeated Bachrum's son, Andar, again demonstrating the superior influence of provincial and central politicians. Andar ran on a ticket nominated by PDI-P and a number of smaller parties, while Andar's opponents from Golkar could not have been more similar to his father's opponents in 2005. In 2005, Golkar attempted to nominate Herry Siregar, the incumbent deputy executive, and Chaidir Ritonga, a provincial party functionary and the son-in-law of a senior Golkar politician. In 2010, Golkar nominated Syahrul Pasaribu, a provincial party functionary and the brother of

[55] "Ketua FPG DPRD Tapsel Dituntut 6 Bulan Penjara," *Waspada Online*, 29 September 2007; accessed 11 March 2011.
[56] Kadir Pohan, "Walikota Sidempuan Doakan Syahrul M Pasaribu Menang Pilkada Tapsel," *Ini Medan Bung*, 24 February 2010; accessed 9 March 2011.

a senior Golkar politician, and Aldinz Rafolo Siregar, the incumbent deputy executive.[57]

The Pasaribu family was one of North Sumatra's most notable political families, both during and after the New Order.[58] The eldest brother, Bomer, served terms as a provincial and national assembly member during the New Order, and again as a national assembly member during the post-reform era. He was the Minister of Manpower in President Gus Dur's cabinet.[59] A second brother, Panusunan, served a term as the district executive of Tapanuli Tengah during the late 1990's.[60] When he ran for district executive in Tapanuli Selatan in 2010, Syahrul was deputy chair of the Golkar provincial board[61] and a member of the provincial assembly, where he chaired the Golkar faction.[62] A younger brother, Gus Irawan, was director of Bank Sumut, North Sumatra's state-owned bank.[63]

Although the brothers spent their early years in Tapanuli Selatan, they pursued their careers in Medan and beyond. Syahrul represented not Tapanuli Selatan but Simalungun district in the provincial assembly.[64] Andar's

---

[57] "Ketua DPD Partai Golkar Sumut H Syamsul Arifin SE, Partai Golkar Usung Pasangan Syahrul Pasaribu/Aldinz Rapolo Maju Jadi Calon Bupati/Wakil Bupati Tapsel," *Harian Sinar Indonesia Baru*, 10 February 2010.

[58] For photos of the brothers and their philanthropic activities, see "Yayasan Haji Hasan Pinayungan: Bergerak di Bidang Sosial dan Keagamaan," *Metro Tabagsel*, 11 May 2010.

[59] Wikipedia, "Bomer Pasaribu," no date; accessed at www.id.wikipedia.org, 19 July 2011.

[60] Situs Resmi Pemerintah Kabupaten Tapanuli Tengah, "Sejarah," no date; accessed at www.tapteng.go.id, 8 March 2011.

[61] "Pengurus DPD II Partai Golkar PSidimpuan (sic) Dilantik," *Harian Sinar Indonesia Baru*, 27 April 2010.

[62] Kodir Pohan, "Pemilukada Tapsel 2010: Golkar Usung H. Syahrul Martua Pasaribu," *Ini Medan Bung*, 9 February 2010; accessed 9 March 2011.

[63] Benny Pasaribu, "Bank Sumut Mampu Penuhi Ketentuan LDR BI," *Harian Medan Bisnis*, 2 October 2010.

[64] KPU Sumut, "Data Calon Terpilih Anggota DPRD Sumut Per Daerah Pemilihan," 2004; accessed at www.kpusumut.org, 13 April 2010; Agus Zulhamidi, "Janter Sirait gantikan Syahrul Pasaribu," *Waspada Online*, 8 October 2010; accessed 19 July 2011.

campaign attempted to portray this as a weakness and cast Andar as a local candidate more deeply attached to the district. One sympathetic newspaper headline, for example, proclaimed that the candidates on Andar's ticket were "born here, and they live here."[65]

Syahrul's campaign team, by contrast, viewed his provincial career as an asset and emphasized his connections to Medan and Jakarta. Syahrul announced his candidacy with a promise to increase "synergy" between the district, provincial and central governments.[66] In the months preceding the election, Syahrul stood in for Syamsul Arifin, Governor of North Sumatra and Golkar's provincial chair, at district party functions. On 27 April 2010 in Padang Sidimpuan, Syahrul inaugurated Golkar's new leadership board in the Governor's name.[67] In February, Syahrul spoke on behalf of the Governor to issue a warning to Bachrum that Golkar was ready to discipline him if he insisted on supporting Andar's candidacy in opposition to the official Golkar candidate, Syahrul.[68]

During the days preceding the election, Syahrul called in his connections. His brothers Bomer, Panusunan and Gus Irawan came to Tapanuli Selatan to stump on his behalf.[69] Chairuman Harahap, one of Tapanuli Selatan's representatives to the national assembly, returned to lend

---

[65] "Andar-Badjora, Putra Daerah Yang Tinggal di Daerah," *Harian Mandiri*, 16 March 2010; accessed 9 March 2011.
[66] "Ribuan Orang Iringi Pasangan Syahrul M Pasaribu Aldinz Rapolo Siregar Mendaftar ke KPU Tapsel," *Harian Sinar Indonesia Baru*, 12 February 2010.
[67] "Pengurus DPD II Partai Golkar PSidimpuan (sic) Dilantik," *Harian Sinar Indonesia Baru*, 27 April 2010.
[68] Kadir Pohan, "Walikota Sidempuan Doakan Syahrul M Pasaribu Menang Pilkada Tapsel," *Ini Medan Bung*, 24 February 2010; accessed 9 March 2011.
[69] "Rakyat Siap Menangkan SARASI," *Metro Tabagsel*, 8 May 2010. For Gus Irawan, personal observation, 12 May 2010. He does not appear in press coverage of the election.

support.[70] Chaidir Ritonga, now a deputy chair of the provincial assembly, appeared in person throughout the campaign to oppose his old adversary Bachrum.[71] Syahrul even arranged for a popular Batak singer named Eddy Silitonga to travel from Jakarta to perform at campaign events.[72]

The machine pursued two strategies, vote-buying and identity appeals, to mobilize voters to support Syahrul. According to many accounts, vote-buying was a primary means of campaigning for many candidates, not just Syahrul. One experienced journalist, for example, estimated that 80 percent of voters chose candidates who paid them. He believed the going rate for buying votes ranged from Rp 30,000 to Rp 100,000 (US$3-US$11).[73] Throughout Indonesia, the eve of the election is well-known as a time when campaign teams hand out cash in key communities in a so-called “attack at dawn” (*serangan fajar*). In Tapanuli Selatan’s election, the attack was not metaphorical. The director of the district development planning agency (*Badan Perencana Pembangunan Daerah Tapanuli Selatan, Bappeda*) and a large group of men assaulted Hifzan Lubis, the director of the Bank Sumut branch in the neighboring district, Mandailing Natal. The assault occurred at the home of Hifzan’s friend in Tapanuli Selatan and was almost certainly related to a dispute over the election. Bank Sumut, directed by Gus Irawan, was supporting Syahrul’s campaign and on the night before the election it is possible that Hifzan was organizing efforts to distribute cash to buy votes. The planning agency director supported Ongku and stood to lose his job if Ongku

[70] “Chairuman: Tapsel harus Maju Pesat,” *Metro Tabagsel*, 9 May 2010.
[71] “Seribu Massa Antar Syahrul-Aldinz Ke KPUD Tapsel,” *Harian Waspada*, 12 February 2010.
[72] “Salam 4, Sarasi di Hati Rakyat Tapsel,” *Metro Tabagsel*, 7 May 2010.
[73] Personal interview, Padang Sidimpuan, 11 May 2010.

lost. Although the papers did not report the reason for the incident, it is likely that the planning agency director resented the partisanship of Bank Sumut in general or, if it was in fact Hifzan's purpose in Tapanuli Selatan, vote-buying activities in particular.[74]

The identity appeal that Syahrul and his running mate Aldinz made to highland residents around Sipirok town was as important as the vote-buying. Throughout the campaign period, Syahrul and Aldinz criticized Ongku for failing to transfer the seat of district government from Padang Sidimpuan to Sipirok.[75] The law partitioning the district stipulated that the move must be complete no later than 18 months after the inauguration of the new districts, but Ongku failed to meet the deadline because he lacked sufficient funds.[76] Deputy executive Aldinz, whose Siregar clan traditionally originates from Sipirok, insisted on complying and opened an office there on 10 February 2009, the last day before time expired.[77] The tactic convinced residents that the Golkar ticket would assert Sipirok's right to seat the government and Syahrul polled over 50% there, winning Tapanuli Selatan's third most populous sub-district by a wide margin.[78]

---

[74] "Diduga Aniaya Kacab Bank Sumut Panyabungan Oknum, Kepala Bappeda Tapsel Ditangkap Polres Tapsel," *Harian Sinar Indonesia Baru*, 12 May 2010.

[75] Ikhwan Nasution, "Soal Pemindahan Ibukota Tapsel: Syahrul Kaji Ulang," *Harian Medan Bisnis*, 2 October 2010.

[76] "Bupati: Tapsel bukan daerah pemekaran, tapi terimbas akibat pemekaran," *Waspada Online*, 6 January 2010; accessed 19 October 2010.

[77] Ikhwan Nasution, "Pemindahan Ibukota Tapsel: Rapolo Dinilai Tidak Konsisten," *Harian Medan Bisnis*, 5 October 2010.

[78] KPU Tapsel, "Rincian Perolehan Suara Sah dan Tidak Sah Pemilihan Umum Kepala Daerah dan Wakil Kepala Daerah: Kabupaten Tapanuli Selatan dari Setiap Kecamatan dalam Wilayah Kabupaten," 2010.

Syahrul decisively won the 2010 district election with 44% of the vote, Andar placed second with 35% and Ongku finished with a mere 18%.[79] Whereas in 2005 Bachrum had achieved a draw in a stand-off against senior Golkar leadership, in 2010 he was a diminished figure. During the intervening five years, Bachrum lost a high-stakes contest over partition, withdrew to Padang Lawas Utara and felt his local influence wane. Golkar meanwhile conducted highly organized district campaigns throughout North Sumatra. In 2010 party discipline was much improved and the central leadership hand-picked many of the candidates.[80] The strategy proved effective, and Golkar backed winning candidates in 7 out of 20 elections across the province, faring especially well in the coastal lowlands.[81]

Bachrum's decline and Golkar's return to dominance in Tapanuli Selatan was illustrated in February 2011 at the party's annual district planning meeting. Syahrul presided over the two day affair at Tapanuli Selatan's best hotel. All of Golkar's local functionaries were present, including Rahmat Nasution, Bachrum's latest successor as Golkar district chair and chair of the district assembly. Now a bit player in the party and the district, Bachrum did not attend.[82]

[79] KPU Sumut, "Daftar Perolehan Suara Calon Kepala Daerah dan Wakil Kepala Daerah Kabupaten Kota Se Sumatera Utara Pemilukada Tanggal 12 Mei 2010," 2010.
[80] Personal interview, Medan, 22 September 2010.
[81] See Appendix.
[82] "Dari Rakerda Partai Berlambang Pohon Beringin di Sipirok," *Metro Tabagsel*, 26 February 2011.

# PART FOUR

## Serdang Bedagai: A Machine and Mobilization

The local politics in Serdang Bedagai is an example of the Golkar machine at its strongest, in terms of both political dominance and administrative effectiveness. The machine, as personified by a former Governor and his younger brother, used gubernatorial power to coerce the district bureaucracy, the election commission and plantation estates to support its 2005 electoral campaign. In doing so, the brothers defeated a mafia that had coalesced a few years previously when Serdang Bedagai was established as a new district. The extremely close competition between contenders, coupled with the Governor's untimely death in September 2005, convinced the new executive that coercion alone would not sustain a strong administration. He undertook to mobilize a broad social coalition by offering patronage to potential allies while continuing to practice the strong-arm tactics that put him in power. The strategy successfully marginalized the former mafia and benefitted a variety of social groups, especially farmers and fisherfolk, that local government often ignores.

Of the three districts under study, Serdang Bedagai is the closest to Medan and the most urban. Because it is connected to the capital by rail as well as the Trans-Sumatra Highway, it is well-integrated within provincial society. Civil servants and businessmen commute; dense networks connect NGO's and youth groups to their counterparts in Medan. Interaction between

Serdang Bedagai and the capital will increase even further if a long-awaited expressway is ever completed to cover the short distance of 78 kilometers.[1]

Unlike in Tapanuli Selatan and Labuhan Batu, where single economic sectors dominate, Serdang Bedagai has a relatively diversified economy. Approximately one-half of its land area is devoted to palm oil and rubber cultivation,[2] while another one-quarter is rice paddy.[3] As a result, in addition to its estates production Serdang Bedagai is one North Sumatra's leading producers of rice. Agriculture accounts for 40% of district GDP and manufacturing contributes another 20% because of local plants that process agricultural products, including palm oil, rubber and fish. Due to the district's semi-urban character, construction, trade, services and real estate are more profitable sectors here than in the other two districts.[4] Nevertheless, Serdang Bedagai's economic diversity has not been able to match Labuhan Batu's boom, and per capita GDP in Serdang Bedagai remains close to the provincial median.[5]

Serdang Bedagai was established as an independent district in 2003 when it was subdivided from Deli Serdang, the district that surrounds Medan municipality. The Sultanate of Serdang, however, had a long history as a wealthy ruling house during Dutch colonial times. In 1946, when coups

---

[1] Bambang Soed, "Tender Tol Medan-Tebing Tinggi Dibuka," *Tempo Interaktif*, 18 November 2005; accessed 2 April 2011.
[2] For two different estimates, see Badan Pusat Statistik Serdang Bedagai, "Kabupaten Serdang Bedagai in Figures 2009," Tables 5.4.1, 5.4.5, 5.4.7 and 5.4.17-20, 2009; Website Pemerintah Kabupaten Serdang Bedagai, "Potensi Perkebunan," no date; accessed at www.serdangbedagaikab.go.id, 29 July 2011.
[3] BPS Sumut, "North Sumatra in Figures 2009," Table 5.1.3; Website Pemerintah Kabupaten Serdang Bedagai, "Pembangunan Pertanian dan Peternakan Kabupaten Sergai," 2006; accessed at www.serdangbedagaikab.go.id, 29 July 2011.
[4] BPS Sergai, "Serdang Bedagai in Figures 2009," Tables 11.1 and 11.3.
[5] BPS Sumut, "Sumatera Utara In Figures 2009," Table 11.3.3.

deposed the aristocracy throughout the province, Serdang was exceptional for its bloodless and orderly transfer of power to the Republican army.[6] The area was not so fortunate in 1965-66. Just as elsewhere in the plantation belt, suspected communists and labor activists were massacred.[7]

**Erry Nuradi, Machine Boss**

Haji Tengku Erry Nuradi, district executive of Serdang Bedagai, is widely regarded as one of the best district executives in North Sumatra, if not Indonesia. His first administration, from 2005-2010, won over 125 awards for excellence in local government and his integrated business permits office became a model for districts throughout the country.[8] In recognition of the district government's successful record of local development the Minister of Home Affairs selected Serdang Bedagai to host the Department's celebration of Regional Autonomy Day in 2009.[9] Erry's own constituents voted overwhelmingly to reelect him in 2010, showing that they also appreciated his leadership.

Erry has been able to accomplish all of this because he benefits from local and provincial support networks. The provincial support was first, and Golkar was the focal point for these networks. His entire career Erry had held office in Golkar or affiliated organizations in Medan, where he was born,

---

[6] "Reid, "The Blood of the People," 232-233.

[7] Tsai and Kammen, "Anti-Communist Violence and the Ethnic Chinese in Medan," forthcoming.

[8] "Gubsu Apresiasi Bupati 5 Tahun Memimpin, 125 Penghargaan Berhasil Diraih," *Harian Sinar Indonesia Baru*, 24 April 2010; "Mendagri Harapkan Seluruh Pemda Miliki Unit Kerja Pelayanan Publik Terpadu," *Harian Sinar Indonesia Baru*, 14 June 2010.

[9] "Peringatan Hari Otonomi Daerah XIII Tingkat Nasional akan Dilaksanakan di Sergai," *Harian Sinar Indonesia Baru*, unknown date, April 2009.

raised and educated. A businessman, he had long held office in the Indonesian Young Businessmen's Association (*Himpunan Pengusaha Muda Indonesia*, HIPMI), first as general director of the Medan chapter, and then in the same position for the provincial organization. He had also served as the provincial deputy chair of the national youth committee (*Kongres Nasional Pemuda Indonesia*, KNPI), the national congress for Indonesia's youth organizations.[10] Finally, when he was elected Serdang Bedagai executive in 2005 Erry was serving a term as provincial secretary of Golkar, another Medan based office.[11]

Even more importantly, his older brother was Governor of North Sumatra in 2005 when Serdang Bedagai conducted its first ever district election. He aggressively made use of his position to support his younger brother's candidacy. Before he retired to enter politics, Major General Rizal Nurdin had a distinguished career in the army. He graduated from the military academy (*Akademi Militer*) in 1971, two years ahead of President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono. Rizal and Susilo followed similar paths through the ranks, and following Rizal's untimely death the President named him a national hero.[12] Rizal was selected to be Governor of North Sumatra in 1998 and reelected in 2003, so on Serdang Bedagai's election day, 27 June 2005, he was midway through his second term in office.

---

[10] KPU Sergai, "Daftar Riwayat Hidup," 2010.

[11] Jaya Arjuna, "Sergai Oleng Diayun Perahu Pilkada," *Media Indonesia*, 14 May 2005.

[12] On the collective relationship between Academy classes 1971 and 1973, see Siddharth Chandra and Douglas Kammen, "Generating Reforms and Reforming Generations: Military Politics in Indonesia's Democratic Transition and Consolidation," *World Politics* 55.1 (October 2002): 96-136.

Erry owed his local networks to Soekirman, his deputy executive. Soekirman had long worked as an advocate for farmer's rights and agricultural development in a prominent North Sumatran NGO called BITRA Indonesia (*Bina Keterampilan Pedesaan Indonesia*, Building Rural Skills in Indonesia). BITRA had worked extensively in Deli Serdang and Serdang Bedagai over the years and had developed a network of farmers, laborers and activists.[13]

Once in office, Erry leveraged his party influence to build a local coalition. Patronage from the center and the province increased the amount of resources at his disposal, and he distributed it through Soekirman's networks. Serdang Bedagai figured prominently in the development schemes of national government and non-governmental organizations alike, and various pilot projects targeted the district. Erry's administration often claimed credit for a major irrigation project funded by the Japan International Cooperation Agency and administered by the central Ministry of Public Works. Erry's highly successful approach to governing Serdang Bedagai district was an example of Golkar's centralized machine expanding its reach from Indonesia's center to the districts, but it also transformed the machine into a mobilizing coalition with a wide constituent base.

## The Controversial 2005 District Election

The partisanship of Governor Rizal was decisive in Serdang Bedagai's 2005 district election. Erry was a provincial politician, while his opponents, Chairullah and David Purba, originated in a local mafia that had coalesced during the campaign to create Serdang Bedagai as a new district. They were

[13] Personal interview, Perbaungan, 29 September 2010.

well-known and well-funded. With Rizal's help Erry displaced the more local candidates and won a controversial election by a mere 954 votes. The unconvincing outcome and Rizal's death in a plane crash in September 2005 meant that Erry began his term with a weak mandate and without his most important patron.

Two years before to the election, Chairullah and David Purba worked together in the campaign to separate Serdang Bedagai from the old Deli Serdang district. Chairullah publicly supported the campaign from his position as district secretary in Deli Serdang. Meanwhile, David Purba chaired the Serdang Bedagai district subdivision board (*Badan Pemekaran Serdang Bedagai*) and spent billions of his own rupiah supporting the campaign. He was arguably more influential than Chairullah because of his position as local leader of the youth organization *Pancasila* Youth (*Pemuda Pancasila*). In this role, Purba directed a large network of young men who could work on construction projects, collect protection payments and demonstrate in the streets. The contracts *Pemuda Pancasila* won made David Purba rich and the thugs he commanded made him feared.

After the creation of Serdang Bedagai in December 2003, Governor Rizal named Chairullah the new district's acting district executive (*Penjabat Bupati*). The new executive's tasks were to prepare the district for a direct election and to construct the offices for a new seat of local government in Sei Rampah town.[14] His working relationship with David Purba continued when Purba won the contract to construct the new district executive offices in Sei

[14] Jaya Arjuna, "Sergai Oleng Diayun Perahu Pilkada," *Media Indonesia*, 14 May 2005.

Rampah.[15] By forming a coalition between the district executive, a powerful business contractor and a major youth organization, Chairullah and Purba became Serdang Bedagai's first mafia.

Though Erry Nuradi was not as well established in Serdang Bedagai as Chairullah or David Purba, he was not a newcomer to politics there. In 2004, he ran for a provincial assembly seat in North Sumatra's third district, which includes Serdang Bedagai and Tebingtinggi municipality. He received more votes in Serdang Bedagai than any of the other dozens of candidates but he did not win a seat because his name was listed too low on Golkar's party list.[16] Similarly, Soekirman had already tested the waters as a politician, first as an advisor to Governor Rizal and then as a candidate in 2004 to represent North Sumatra in the national legislature (*Dewan Perwakilan Daerah*, DPD).[17] In Serdang Bedagai, he received the third most votes in a field of 48.[18]

Erry and Soekirman made a formidable ticket, but they nevertheless needed help to defeat David Purba and Chairullah. As acting district executive, Chairullah had influence over the local bureaucracy and the authority to form a new election commission favorable to his candidacy. David Purba was very wealthy and directed a local network that Soekirman would be hard pressed to match, especially in urban areas.

---

[15] Komisi Pemilihan Umum Serdang Bedagai, "Daftar Riwayat Hidup (Bio Data) Pasangan Calon Kepala Daerah dan Wakil Kepala Daerah Kabupaten Serdang Bedagai," 2010; Vedi Hadiz, *Localising Power*, 108.

[16] Komisi Pemilihan Umum Deli Serdang, "Berita Acara: Rekapitulasi Hasil Penghitungan Suara Komisi Pemilihan Umum Kabupaten/Kota untuk Pemilihan Umum Anggota DPRD Provinsi," 21 April 2004.

[17] Hadiz, *Localising Power*, 111.

[18] KPU Deli Serdang, "Berita Acara Rekapitulasi Hasil Suara Komisi Pemilihan Umum Kabupaten/Kota untuk Pemilihan Umum Anggota DPR dan DPD," 22 April 2004.

Erry and Soekirman's first lucky break came when Chairullah decided to run. First, Chairullah and David Purba competed for similar voters. On election day, in sub-districts where David Purba polled well, Chairullah polled poorly, and vice versa.[19] Second, Chairullah's decision to stand in the election gave Governor Rizal justification to remove him from his position as acting district executive and to replace him with a more pliable appointee, Kasim Siyo.[20] Kasim Siyo's appointment was important because he, not Chairullah, oversaw the formation of Serdang Bedagai's new election commission and made the appointments to fill out the staff of the election commission secretariat. The election secretariat supported Erry so fully that the commission secretary would ultimately be convicted of manipulating election returns and sentenced to two months in prison.

Governor Rizal intervened in other ways, too. Before the election, he called a meeting with the directors of Serdang Bedagai's plantations and asked them to support his brother Erry. His guests included managers of both private and state-owned estates. The Governor wanted them to pressure their workers to vote for Erry.[21] The effort paid off on election day when two sub-districts with extensive rubber and palm oil plantations, Dolok Masihul and Dolok Merawan, returned two of Erry's best sub-district results.[22]

Even with the Governor leaning on the local bureaucracy and local businesses to support Erry, the outcome of the election was extremely close.

[19] KPU Sergai, "Berita Acara Rekapitulasi Acara Hasil Penghitungan Suara Pemilihan Kepala Daerah dan Wakil Kepala Daerah di Tingkat Kabupaten/Kota oleh Komisi Pemilihan Umum Daerah Kabupaten/Kota," 2 July 2005.

[20] "14 Kepala Daerah di Sumut Akan Diganti Pejabat Sementara," *Suara Pembaruan*, 26 February 2005.

[21] Personal interview, Medan, 25 March 2011.

[22] KPU Sergai, "Rekap Hasil Penghitungan Suara Pemilihan Kepala Daerah," 2005.

With 247,265 votes cast, Erry defeated David Purba by only 954 votes; less than one-half of one percent of the total.[23] The tiny margin alone was cause for controversy, but in addition numerous problems flawed the election and prompted David Purba's supporters to accuse Governor Rizal, the election commission and Erry of election fraud.[24]

The headline of North Sumatra's *Waspada* Daily two days after the province-wide round of elections read "Binjai and Serdang Bedagai elections flawed."[25] The newspaper criticized the Serdang Bedagai election commission because it delayed the release of tabulation data and at the time the edition went to press the commission still had not made any announcements regarding the outcome. It further reported that confusion over collecting ballots had triggered rumors that the election commission was manipulating data.

Besides *Waspada*, the official election monitoring committee (*Panwaslu*) also suspected fraud. In a letter to the election commission, it recommended that six villages repeat the polling because of evidence that ballot-stuffing affected the results in those villages.[26] For his part, David Purba appealed the outcome of the election to the state high court in Medan (*Pengadilan Tinggi*).[27]

The vote count was most contentious in Tebingtinggi sub-district, where the results were crucial to Erry's victory. Erry distanced himself from David Purba in only three sub-districts. He beat David Purba by 10% and 19%

---

[23] Ibid.

[24] "Mendagri Diprotes Massa Serdang Bedagai," *Suara Karya Online*, 29 September 2005; accessed 1 April 2011.

[25] "Pilkada Binjai Dan Sergai Tak Mulus," *Harian Waspada*, 29 June 2005.

[26] "Mendagri Diprotes Massa Serdang Bedagai," *Suara Karya Online*, 29 September 2005; accessed 1 April 2011.

[27] Hadiz, *Localising Power*, 111.

respectively in Dolok Masihul and Dolok Merawan, two sub-districts with extensive estates. In Tebingtinggi, he trounced David Purba by 29%. In absolute terms, Erry gained an advantage of 8,931 votes in the sub-district, a figure representing 11% of his total for the entire district.[28] The data was even more unexpected given the demographics of Tebingtinggi. The sub-district comprises the immediate hinterlands of Tebingtinggi municipality, so it was one of Serdang Bedagai's most urban and industrialized sub-districts. It therefore should have been an area of strength for David Purba, because *Pemuda Pancasila* thrives in urban areas where unemployed youth and commercial activity are concentrated. For example, Purba polled best in Perbaungan sub-district, another urban area. Five years later, in 2010, another *Pemuda Pancasila* candidate won Tebingtinggi municipality's mayoral election.[29] On the other hand, surprising election returns provide circumstantial evidence at best and Erry performed well in Tebingtinggi sub-district in his 2004 bid for a seat on the provincial assembly.[30]

Whatever the merits of David Purba's appeal, the provincial and central levels of government endorsed Erry's victory. On 25 July 2005, the state high court in Medan overruled David Purba's appeal and confirmed

---

[28] KPU Sergai, "Rekap Hasil Penghitungan Suara Pemilihan Kepala Daerah," 2005.
[29] "Perolehan Suara Tidak Tergoyahkan: Syafri Chap – Hafas Fadillah Dipastikan Jadi Walikota Tebingtinggi 2010 – 2015," *Harian Sinar Indonesia Baru*, 15 May 2010. The Constitutional Court later overturned the result.
[30] KPU Deli Serdang, "Rekap Hasil Penghitungan Suara untuk Pemilihan Umum Anggota DPRD Provinsi," 21 April 2004.

Erry's victory.[31] Shortly after that, the Minister of Home Affairs issued a letter formally recognizing the election result.[32]

Official recognition could not quiet the protests, however, especially when in August the secretary of the election commission, Lilik, was convicted of manipulating election data and sentenced to two months in prison.[33] Despite the embarrassment of the conviction and the objections of the protesters who traveled to Jakarta to demonstrate in front of the Ministry of Home Affairs, the state high court refused to reconsider its ruling and Erry began his first term as district executive of Serdang Bedagai.

To achieve victory in 2005, Erry relied on the support of his older brother, Governor Rizal Nurdin. The Governor ensured the local bureaucratic administration was supportive of his brother's candidacy, he pressured local plantation businesses to get their employees out to vote and in all likelihood he authorized election fraud.

On 6 September 2005, Rizal Nurdin died in an airplane crash on his way to a meeting in Jakarta with the President and Indonesia's other governors.[34] The Governor's death deprived Erry of his most important patron at a time when he was embroiled in controversy. His reputation and legitimacy were damaged after Lilik was convicted of manipulating election data. He took office amid protests from the supporters of his campaign opponents. Although the election had been decided, David Purba would continue to be a

[31] "Mendagri Diprotes Massa Serdang Bedagai," *Suara Karya Online*, 29 September 2005; accessed 1 April 2011.
[32] "Hasil Pilkada Sergai Tak Bisa Dibatalkan," *Suara Karya Online*, 30 August 2005; accessed 1 April 2011.
[33] Ibid.
[34] "Dua Tahun Musibah Mandala Dan Alm HT Rizal Nurdin; Kesederhanaan Jadi Teladan," *Waspada Online*, 6 September 2007; accessed 31 July 2011.

formidable opponent that Erry would have to face without the backing of his powerful brother.

## From Provincial Backing to a Local Coalition

When Erry began his first term, he was an outsider to Serdang Bedagai's local politics who had drawn on his connections at the provincial level to achieve victory at the district level. Over the course of the term, however, Erry systematically constructed a broad local coalition so that when he stood for reelection in 2010 he no longer depended on outside help. His local support was so unchallenged in 2010 that Erry won by the widest margin of any of North Sumatra's 20 district elections. Erry and Soekirman won 56% of the vote and defeated Chairullah's and David Purba's combined ticket by a margin of 30%.[35]

Erry constructed the local coalition in three ways. He cultivated allies out of four groups from civil society: business, farmers, the press and NGO's; he consolidated his influence over four formal institutions of the state already predisposed to support him: the bureaucracy, the election commission, Golkar and the district assembly; and he attacked his opponents (namely David Purba, Chairullah and an activist named Jhonni Sitompul) with legal prosecution and bureaucratic reassignments. In pursuing these tactics, Erry deployed his influence at the provincial and central levels of government to obtain extra resources and leverage, but he also leaned heavily on the local connections of his deputy Soekirman.

[35] KPU Sumut, "Daftar Perolehan Suara Pemilukada Tanggal 12 Mei 2010."

*Reaching out to civil society*

Erry's administration endeared itself to business in two ways. First, it enacted policies that reduced bureaucratic red-tape for business and avoided gratuitous local taxes and fees. In 2006, Erry established North Sumatra's first integrated business permits office to streamline the regulatory process in the district. The office issued all business-related permits, collected local user fees, and acted as the local government's liaison with businesses operating in the district. The program gained national attention for its progress toward making business regulation easier for business, more transparent and more accountable.[36] In addition, unlike many other districts in North Sumatra, under Erry Serdang Bedagai passed few local regulations, taxes or user fees that the Ministry of Home Affairs voided because they contradicted national policy aimed at encouraging investment.[37]

Second, Erry's approach to tendering projects materially benefited local business. Erry preferred to tender many small projects as opposed to a few large, high-prestige projects.[38] During his first term, for example, Erry constructed 29 new schools, including 11 high schools, throughout Serdang Bedagai.[39] He built 76 new health clinics of varying sizes.[40] With the exception of a new hospital and a new district assembly building, the high

---

[36] Seri Pendokumentasian Best Practices Inovasi Kabupaten di Indonesia, BKKSI 2008, "Unit Pelayanan Perijinan Terpadu Satu Pintu, Melawan 'Penyakit Birokrasi', Meningkatkan Retribusi," *Yayasan Inovasi Pemerintahan Daerah*, 6 February 2009; accessed at www.yipd.or.id, 1 April 2011.

[37] Ditjen Perimbangan Keuangan, "Informasi Peraturan Daerah: Peraturan Daerah Kab. Serdang Bedagai," *Departemen Keuangan*, no date; accessed at www.djpk.depkeu.go.id/pdrd, 21 April 2011.

[38] Personal interview, Tebing Tinggi, 11 October 2010.

[39] "H.T. Nuradi & H. Soekirman: 5 Tahun Sukses Memimpin Sergai," *Bulletin Serdang Bedagai*, Special Edition XXVI July – August 2010.

[40] "Sehat, Modal Dasar Pembangunan," *Bulletin Serdang Bedagai*, Special Edition XXVI July – August 2010.

schools were Erry's most high-value tenders. The model meant that Erry tendered a large number of projects with short completion times and budget allocations turned over to new projects every year. In other words, local businesses benefited from frequent opportunities to win government tenders. As a result, few local businessmen criticized Erry's administration, publicly or privately. Erry was able to direct projects to his favorite contractors, one of whom is his brother-in-law, Azmi Yuli Sitorus, and still tender enough contracts to keep everyone else in business, too.[41]

Erry's first administration reached out to peasant farmers through deputy executive Soekirman's local connections and Erry's provincial and national ones. While in office, Soekirman repeatedly met with farmers. In 2006, for example, he received a delegation of 1,000 farmers and agreed in principle with their opposition to imported rice.[42] In 2008, he delivered the opening address at the inaugural congress of the Serdang Bedagai peasant farmer's association (*Serikat Petani Serdang Bedagai*).[43] Erry used his influence with the provincial and central government to procure extra assistance for Serdang Bedagai's farmers and fisherman. In 2008, the district received provincial earmarks to stabilize the price of corn[44] and to establish a pilot program for green mussel farming.[45] In 2009, the central department of ocean fisheries (*Departemen Kelautan dan Perikanan*) selected Serdang

---

[41] Personal interview, Tebing Tinggi, 11 October 2010.

[42] Khairul Ikhwan, "Diterima Wakil Bupati, 1.000 Petani Membubarkan Diri," *Detik.com*, 21 September 2006; accessed 8 April 2011.

[43] "Petani Sergai Laksanakan Kongres Pertama," *Bitra Indonesia*, 5 July 2009; accessed 8 April 2011.

[44] "Pemprovsu Melalui APBD Sumut 2008 Alokasikan Rp 3 Miliar Pada 6 Daerah Tk II," *Harian Sinar Indonesia Baru*, 17 December 2008.

[45] "Sergai Bakal Jadi 'Pilot Project' Pengembangan Budidaya Kerang Hijau di Sumut," *Analisa Daily*, 4 December 2008.

Bedagai as a recipient of special funds to support fishing cooperatives.[46] Erry's influence also helped the district promote these efforts. In 2008 and 2009, the President of Indonesia named Serdang Bedagai the winner of consecutive food production awards, honors about which the district government tirelessly reminded voters.[47]

The signature farming project of Erry's first term began before Serdang Bedagai existed as a district, but that has not discouraged Erry from taking credit for it. In 2003, the Indonesian Ministry of Public Works began rehabilitating the Ular River irrigation system with funding provided by a loan from the Japanese International Cooperation Agency.[48] The project was nearing completion in 2010 and the district administration boasted to voters that it would provide irrigation to 18,500 hectares of rice paddy.[49]

For those villagers unconvinced by the administration's various farm-friendly projects, Erry offered a more tangible sign of support in the year preceding the election. In 2009, Erry rewarded every village chief in Serdang Bedagai an official motorbike for conducting village business.[50] No doubt Erry hoped that these influential community leaders would remember the gifts during the 2010 election campaign.

---

[46] "Departemen Kelautan dan Perikanan Kucurkan Dana Rp 2 Miliar untuk Sergai," *Analisa Daily*, 15 January 2009.

[47] "Untuk ke Dua Kalinya, Bupati Sergai Kembali Terima Penghargaan Ketahanan Pangan dari Gubsu," *Harian Sinar Indonesia Baru*, 4 December 2009; "2 Kali Berturut-turut: Sergai Terima Penghargaan Ketapang, Tingkat Nasional & Provinsi," *Bulletin Serdang Bedagai*, Edition XXII November – December 2009.

[48] Badan Perencanaan dan Pembangunan Nasional, "Permasalahan Proyek-proyek Pinjaman JICA Tahun Anggaran 2010, Posisi: 31 Maret 2010," 31 March 2010; accessed at www.bappenas.go.id/get-file-server/node/9968/, 15 April 2011.

[49] Personal interview, Perbaungan, 29 September 2010.

[50] "Seluruh Kepdes Sergai Dapat Kendaraan Operasional," *Bulletin Serdang Bedagai*, Edition XX July – August 2009.

Finally, Erry cultivated alliances with influential activists in NGO's and the local press. Soekirman was the bridge to the NGO community. In 2006 the administration solicited input from Soekirman's former organization, BITRA, when it was developing the integrated business permits office.[51] Soekirman frequently made public appearances with BITRA and other NGO's, such as during the festivities to mark World Food Day 2010 when Soekirman participated in a public dialogue with a district assembly member, the director of BITRA and the chair of a state-sponsored farmer's association (*Gapoktan, Gabungan Kelompok Tani*).[52]

Erry's administration reached out to journalists primarily through its public relations division (*Bagian Hubungan Masyarakat*). The office hosted journalists at the executive offices and distributed high quality press releases that made their jobs much easier. Many of these releases appeared verbatim in local newspapers.[53] On occasion, Erry personally met journalists and asked them to temper criticism. He did this on several occasions with Jhonni Sitompul.[54]

*Consolidating control over state institutions*

While Erry courted allies in civil society, he tightened his grip on Serdang Bedagai's formal state institutions: the bureaucracy, the election

[51] Seri Pendokumentasian Best Practices, BKKSI 2008, "Unit Pelayanan Perijinan Terpadu Satu Pintu."
[52] "Hari Pangan Sedunia 2010 Sumut Di Sergai," *Berita Sore*, 26 October 2010; accessed 8 April 2011.
[53] Compare, for example, "Kecamatan Pegajahan Juara Kecamatan Terbaik Sumut 2008," *Bulletin Serdang Bedagai*, Edition XVII January – February 2009; "Pegajahan Sergai Terima Tunggul Kecamatan Terbaik dari Gubsu," *Harian Sinar Indonesia Baru*, 30 Januari 2009.
[54] Personal interview, Tebing Tinggi, 26 March 2011.

commission, political parties and the district assembly. As a result of Governor Rizal's intervention, Erry began his administration with the bureaucracy and election commission already sympathetic to him. Erry carefully nurtured this partisanship. He made bureaucratic appointments based on personal loyalty, not political considerations, and brought much of his staff with him from Medan.[55] Erry showed how highly he valued personal loyalty with his first appointment to district secretary, the district's top bureaucrat. Many local observers expected him to reward Aliman Siregar, an important campaign supporter in 2005, with an appointment as district secretary. It was rumored that the two had made a quid pro quo agreement to exchange support for the appointment. When he made the selection, however, Erry passed over Aliman in favor of Nasrun Husin Lubis.[56]

In his efforts to maintain the favor of the election commission, Erry made a rare miscalculation. The resulting scandal cost two of Erry's allies in the commission their jobs, but nevertheless a third Erry ally ultimately became the new commission chairperson. Erry provoked outrage during the fasting month in 2009 when he paid for three commission members to take the *umroh* pilgrammage to Mecca.[57] While the members were still abroad, the local press picked up the story, and the national press quickly followed suit. The provincial election commission denounced the gift and reported it to the ethics council (*Dewan Kehormatan*).[58] The resulting scrutiny revealed further

---

[55] "Masyarakat kesalkan pejabat Tidak tinggal di Serdang Bedagai: Pemkab segera bangun Rumah Dinas," *Waspada Online*, 14 July 2009; accessed 12 July 2011.
[56] Personal interview, Tebing Tinggi, 11 October 2010.
[57] Muhammad Azhari Tanjung, "3 anggota KPUD Sergai mengecewakan," *Waspada Online*, 1 September 2009; accessed 5 March 2011.
[58] "KPU Serdang Bedagai Diperiksa," *Kompas*, 10 November 2009.

irregularities and two of the pilgrims plus one other commission member were ultimately sacked for accepting bribes during the 2009 general elections.[59] The ethics council also recommended that the third pilgrim, Syarianto, be removed from the commission for accepting Erry's gift.[60] The recommendation was not accepted, however, and Syarianto retained his position because he was not implicated for taking bribes.[61] In the reorganized election commission, the five members elected Syarianto as the new commission chair and Erry's links to the commission weathered the scandal damaged but intact.

Unlike many other district executives, Erry never faced a hostile district assembly. From his first day in office, Erry's influence within Golkar extended to the assembly. During 2004 to 2009, Golkar controlled 10 seats in the assembly, one more than rival PDI-P. The remaining 26 seats were divided among 12 other parties.[62] M. Yusuf Basrun chaired both the local Golkar chapter and the assembly, while Erry maintained a leadership position within the party as regional coordinator for the provincial board (*Ketua Koordinator Daerah II*).[63] Erry thus indirectly supervised the largest faction in the assembly. When Basrun's term as district party chair ended in 2010, Erry succeeded him, further solidifying his grip on Golkar locally.[64] After the 2009 general elections, Erry's dominance over the district assembly became even more pronounced. Two of Erry's closest cronies won assembly seats

---

[59] Osman, "Ketua dan Anggota KPUD Sergai Akhirnya Dipecat," *Ekspos News*, 11 December 2009; accessed 5 March 2011.
[60] "DK: Pecat KPU Serdang Bedagai," *Kompas*, 27 November 2009.
[61] Personal interview, Perbaungan, 29 September 2010.
[62] BPS Sergai, "Serdang Bedagai in Figures 2006," Table 2.2.1, 2006.
[63] "Ribuan Massa Golkar Padati Lapangan Segi Tiga Perbaungan," *Ini Medan Bung*, 27 March 2009; accessed 1 August 2011.
[64] "HT Erry Nuradi Pimpin Partai Golkar Sergai," *Harian Waspada*, 17 February 2010.

representing two different parties. Azmi Yuli Sitorus, Erry's brother-in-law, became the chair of the Demokrat faction which controlled 7 seats, while Usman Sitorus chaired the PPP faction and 5 seats. Between Golkar, with 6 seats, Demokrat and PPP, Erry controlled 40% of the seats in the district assembly.[65]

*Attacking opponents*

Erry harrassed political opponents as skillfully as he built alliances and deepened his control over political organizations. Erry typically pursued two lines of attack: he undermined rivals' livelihoods and he brought them to court. In both respects he frequently exercised his provincial and central influence. During his first term in Serdang Bedagai, Erry used this one-two combination against his old rivals David Purba, Chairullah and a vocal critic named Jhonni Sitompul.

David Purba was Erry's most threatening rival because he controlled *Pemuda Pancasila*, its contracting business and its street muscle. In 2008, Erry used his provincial level influence to force David Purba out of *Pemuda Pancasila*. In that year, Erry became a member of the advisory council to the North Sumatra provincial leadership of *Pemuda Pancasila*.[66] That same year, after 20 years of holding office in *Pemuda Pancasila*, David Purba failed to win reelection as the chair of the Serdang Bedagai chapter of the organization. In 2010, when David Purba again ran for political office in Serdang Bedagai,

[65] Personal interview, Tebing Tinggi, 11 October 2010; "Keputusan Gubernur Sumatera Utara No: 170/4087.K/Tahun 2009, Tanggal 12 Oktober 2009: Pengangkatan Anggota DPRD Kabupaten Sergai Periode 2009 – 2014," reprinted in *Bulletin Serdang Bedagai*, Edition XXI September – October 2009.
[66] KPU Sergai, "Daftar Riwayat Hidup," 2010.

he no longer held a position in *Pemuda Pancasila*, and had struck up an unlikely alliance with the traditionalist Islamic organization, *Nadhlatul Ulama*.[67]

Though Erry attacked David Purba's career, it was no personal vendetta. Erry needed to secure the support of Serdang Bedagai's youth groups to bolster his growing local coalition. In 2007, Erry acquired a national level position in the Communication Forum for the Sons and Daughters of Veterans (*Forum Komunikasi Putra Putri Purnawirawan dan Putra Putri TNI POLRI*), another powerful youth group and *Pemuda Pancasila's* rival.[68] In March 2010, his maneuvering paid off locally when the Serdang Bedagai branch of the national youth congress (KNPI) endorsed his candidacy by awarding him a token of appreciation and affirming him as a leader for the district's youth.[69]

Just as he interfered in David Purba's career, Erry attacked the livelihoods of Chairullah and Jhonni Sitompul. Since Governor Rizal removed him from his position as acting district executive of Serdang Bedagai, Chairullah has not received a promotion. For six years his career has been stalled in an unimportant position in a bureaucratic backwater, the provincial board for national unity and community protection (*Badan Kesatuan Bangsa dan Perlindungan Masyarakat*).[70] Erry used his authority to reassign civil servants to harass Jhonni Sitompul's wife. Jhonni's wife worked for years as a

---

[67] Majelis Pimpinan Wilayah, Pemuda Pancasila Sumatera Utara, "Kantor Ranting – Cabang Kabupaten Serdang Bedagai," no date; accessed at www.ppsumut.com/cabang/?id=21, 8 April 2011.
[68] Ibid.
[69] "Rapat Paripurna DPD KNPI Tetapkan HT Erry Nuradi Sebagai Tokoh Pemersatu Pemuda," *Harian Sinar Indonesia Baru*, 9 March 2010.
[70] KPU Sergai, "Daftar Riwayat Hidup," 2010.

midwife in the important district town of Pasar Bengkel. Her position included an official house as a perquisite, and Jhonni's family lived there. In 2010, Erry reassigned Jhonni's wife to a health clinic in the remote sub-district Silinda. As a result, Jhonni's family lost their house.[71]

In the case of each of these three political opponents, Erry brought them to court in addition to attacking their livelihoods. In 2004, while Chairullah was still acting district executive in Serdang Bedagai, Governor Rizal's provincial attorney general initiated a corruption investigation against him for crimes he allegedly committed while still district secretary of Deli Serdang.[72] After Governor Rizal's death, the investigation proceeded slowly but steadily and in 2007 the state court in Lubukpakam, Deli Serdang, convicted Chairullah of corruption and sentenced him to eighteen months imprisonment. The following year, the North Sumatra high court upheld the decision and added six months to the sentence. Chairullah again appealed the decision, but in August 2010 the Supreme Court upheld the high court's decision.[73] In addition to this long-running case, in March 2010 a central anti-corruption commission (KPK) investigation team questioned the beleaguered Chairullah about his actions as acting district executive of Serdang Bedagai. The investigation, which took place only two months before the district election, targeted both Chairullah and David Purba because of a reforestation tender Chairullah's administration awarded to David Purba in 2005.[74]

[71] Personal interview, Tebing Tinggi, 23 September 2010.
[72] Hambali Batubara and Bambang Soed, "Bupati Serdang Tersangka Korupsi," *Tempo Interaktif*, 15 December 2004; accessed 15 April 2011.
[73] "Kasasi Terdakwa Korupsi Ditolak, Mantan Sekdakab DS Dibui 2 Tahun," *Pos Metro Medan*, 14 January 2011.
[74] "Chairullah Diperiksa KPK, Johan: Kami Mengusut Kasus Sergai," *Harian Sumut Pos*, 26 March 2010.

In September 2009, the Medan police arrested David Purba on charges of fraud valued at 200 million Rupiah, or US$20,000. The prosecution witness was a business associate of David's who had lent him the money in 2007. The project for which David borrowed the money fell through, and he never returned the money.[75] The case was tried in the Medan state court in June 2010, just a month after the election, and David Purba was eventually sentenced to six months in prison and twelve months probation.[76] Rumors in Serdang Bedagai allege that someone, presumably associated with Erry, offered to pay the witness an amount equal to David's debt if he agreed to testify against David in court.[77]

Jhonni Sitompul was involved in an altercation with two security guards at the district revenue office (*Pendapatan Pengelolaan Keuangan dan Asset Daerah*) in August 2009. Both sides accused the other of assault and reported the incident to the local police, and both cases were tried in the Tebingtinggi state court in February 2010.[78] Jhonni was sentenced to probation, while the security guards were sentenced to four and eight months in prison.[79]

It is unlikely that three of Erry's most important opponents all faced legal prosecution during the 2010 campaign period by coincidence. Erry made

---

[75] Ridin, "Poltabes Medan kembali panggil OK David Purba," *Waspada Online*, 3 March 2010; accessed 15 April 2011.
[76] "OK David Purba Tetap Mangkir, Hakim Berang," *Harian Sumut Pos*, 15 June 2010; "Mantan Cawabup Sergai OK David Divonis Percobaan," *Star Berita*, 14 October 2010; accessed 15 April 2011.
[77] Personal interview, Tebing Tinggi, 11 October 2010.
[78] Asnawi, "Dipukul Oknum Satpol PP Sergai, Wartawan Dituntut 4 Bulan Bui," *Pos Metro Medan*, 25 February 2010.
[79] Personal interview, Tebing Tinggi, 11 October 2010; "Dua Terdakwa Penganiya (sic) Wartawan di Tebingtinggi, Divonis Ringan," *Ekspos News*, 10 March 2010; accessed 15 April 2011.

the most of his opponents' indiscretions and prosecuted them when the opportunity arose. These three cases demonstrate the impressive reach of Erry's influence within the justice system. Chairullah's case originated in the Lubukpakam state court and the appeals process reached the Supreme Court. David Purba was tried in the Medan state court, and Jhonni Sitompul in the Tebingtinggi state court. Different public prosecutors from different local administrations handled each case. Even the KPK visited from Jakarta to investigate both of Erry's electoral opponents just two months before the district election. Regardless of the prosecutor and venue, each case returned a conviction of Erry's opponents, excepting only the KPK's preliminary investigation.

**Conclusion**

During his first term in office, Erry constructed a broad local coalition of support that included local business, farmers, NGO activists, the bureaucracy, the election commission, the district assembly and parts of the youth groups. He undermined the livelihoods and secured criminal convictions of his chief rivals. He accomplished these things by utilizing party and personal networks to direct patronage to his allies and to apply coercive pressure to his opponents. In 2005, Erry was an outsider who took office amid protests after a flawed election. In 2010, his local coalition reelected him by the largest winning margin of any candidate in North Sumatra in 2010. Erry transformed a Golkar machine into a mobilizing coalition.

# PART FIVE

## Conclusion: Mafias and Machines in North Sumatra

This thesis argues that at least three types of coalitions contend for power at the local level in Indonesia. These coalitions amass political strength from the set of institutions that fall under their control. These institutions, and the resources they command, explain and constrain the strategies each coalition pursues in contests for power. In Labuhan Batu, Tapanuli Selatan and Serdang Bedagai districts, the most consequential institutions were 1) the local state apparatus, 2) party organizations which have the ability to override the provincial bureaucracy and 3) social networks with the potential to mobilize popular constituencies. In those districts, mafias based within the local state contended against a Golkar machine which dominated provincial government. In some cases, popular constituencies contributed decisive support to either mafias or machines when they were incorporated into mobilizing coalitions. These contests featured money, coercion and popular mobilization to the degree that each coalition could summon such resources. How representative of the rest of Indonesia is this pattern of contention among coalitions?

The thesis hypothesizes that similar elite coalitions will coalesce in other districts to the extent that similar sources of power, namely local state spoils, party organizations and strong social networks, are available to elites. It asserts that this is most likely to be the case in Outer Island districts that neither benefit from significant oil, gas or mineral revenues nor enjoy special autonomous status. While a full survey of Indonesia's districts is beyond the

scope of the thesis, this conclusion situates the three case studies within the larger field of cases in North Sumatra, where 20 districts (excluding those on Nias Island) have conducted local elections since the beginning of 2010. In doing so, it tests the hypothesis against the outcomes of these elections. Two final sections consider the implications for decentralized government and democratic elections, respectively, in North Sumatra.

## The 2010 Local Elections in North Sumatra

Within North Sumatra, the approach is widely applicable. Mafias and machines are discernable in many, though not all, districts and broadly conform to the following geographic pattern of distribution: a Golkar machine predominated on the coasts, incumbent mafias were most successful in the highland interior and palm oil-funded challengers captured office in booming plantation districts. Mobilizing coalitions are more difficult to detect on the basis of a brief survey of election results, but plantation districts are likely candidates. An overview of the North Sumatra 2010 local elections is presented in the Appendix.

Golkar has successfully established a machine in North Sumatra, while PDI-P and Demokrat have not, primarily because of its control over the Governor's office. The Governor's attorney general (*Jaksa Agung*) applies coercive force by prosecuting Golkar's political opponents, while the Governor's power over the provincial bureaucracy confers access to patronage. In addition, over the last three legislative elections, Golkar has maintained a consistent district and provincial legislative presence while PDI-P's and Demokrat's legislative shares have ebbed and flowed. Finally,

Golkar's central board campaigned aggressively on behalf of its local candidates in 2010. In other provinces, however, Golkar may not enjoy such a privileged position. PDI-P, Demokrat or any other party might build a rival machine if it can link local and provincial power as Golkar has done in North Sumatra.

In both the eastern and western coastal lowlands of North Sumatra, representatives of the Golkar machine replaced mafias that had held power for two terms. The outgoing incumbents, precluded from running for office by the two-term limit, advanced proxy candidates to succeed them in three districts and four cities. Only two proxies were elected, however, demonstrating the instability of local mafias. Instead, Golkar's machine dominated. Party-supported candidates took office in three districts and two cities, including Medan, Asahan and Serdang Bedagai, three of the four most populous bailiwicks conducting elections.[1]

Among lowland districts, Sibolga municipality deserves special mention because the incumbent mafia accommodated, rather than opposed, Golkar. Sahat Panggabean, the outgoing mayor, paired his son-in-law as the deputy candidate with Syarfi Hutauruk, a Golkar representative to the national assembly (DPR). Even though Golkar formally nominated another candidate, Syarfi attracted the support of many local party activists who were ultimately dismissed from the party.[2] In this way, the incumbent mafia simultaneously undermined party support for its opponent and ingratiated itself with Golkar

[1] Simalungun is the second most populous North Sumatra district to conduct elections in 2010.
[2] "Golkar Sibolga Pecat 21 Kader," *Harian Waspada*, 10 May 2010.

networks at the municipal and national levels. Sibolga thus exemplified a local mafia that held onto power by aligning itself with a party machine.

In the highlands, mafias outperformed Golkar but both did badly. Three incumbent mafias were reelected in campaigns marred by violence. In Humbang Hasundutan and Samosir, the opposition violently protested perceived irregularities while in Pakpak Bharat the major candidates intimidated opponents and voters alike.[3] In four other interior districts incumbent candidates lost reelection campaigns, once again underscoring mafia instability. Golkar fared even worse, supporting only two winning candidates.

In elections where incumbents and Golkar both lost, many palm oil candidates won. The sons of plantation tycoons won in Mandailing Natal district and Pematang Siantar municipality, and in all three Labuhan Batu districts the winning candidates campaigned with the financial backing of palm oil planters. The campaigns of aspiring palm oil mafias involved varying degrees of organization. In all likelihood they bought many votes, but some, such as in Labuhan Batu, also mobilized popular constituencies.

What explains geographic variation within North Sumatra among the types of dominant elite coalitions? While a complete explanation would require further research, the analysis presented in the thesis suggests a likely hypothesis. In accordance with the argument that party machines possess coercive and material advantages over local mafias, a machine dominated North Sumatra's most populous and strategic bailiwicks. A combination of

[3] ICG, "Preventing Violence in Local Elections;" personal interviews, Pakpak Bharat, 22 May 2010.

judicial prosecutions, vote buying, patronage and popular mobilizing swept Golkar candidates to victory in nearly every district and city around Medan. These districts command North Sumatra's economy and will have the greatest impact on the 2014 general elections. Although it is possible that infighting crippled Golkar in the sparsely populated highlands, it is more likely that Golkar simply had less interest in these districts and conceded them to the incumbents. In plantation districts, finally, aspiring mafias enjoy the benefits of global demand for palm oil. Windfall profits have made local plantation owners uniquely influential and tipped the balance of power in favor of palm oil-led coalitions.

The pattern of variation is invisible to those who do not disaggregate the category of "New Order elites." In North Sumatra, every type of successful coalition has demonstrable links to the previous regime. Mafias include career bureaucrats who served in Suharto's bureaucracy, local business contractors with a lifetime of work history during the New Order and youth group leaders who started out as paramilitaries fostered by Suharto's armed forces (*Angkatan Bersenjata Republik Indonesia*).[4] Golkar was the regime's party and the umbrella for many of its corporatist organizations. Today's plantation tycoons grew rich because of land concessions granted during the New Order. Even social mobilization, to the extent that it is organized by youth groups, as it was in Labuhan Batu, is linked to the New Order. As long as the post-reform era is less than a lifetime removed from the fall of Suharto, the political elite will be products of the New Order because they lived at a time when the

---

[4] In 1999, the name was changed to Indonesian National Military (*Tentara Nasional Indonesia*).

regime encompassed Indonesia's political, economic and social life.[5] Accordingly, the variation documented in the thesis is fully consistent with the work that demonstrates continuity between the New Order and post-reform eras.[6] However, emphasizing continuity risks overlooking the considerable variation in and between the types of coalitions that are engaged in local politics.

## Countering Decentralization Reform

Viewed from a purely local perspective, it appears that mafias must expand or perish. The potential of the local state apparatus to generate patronage resources is too limited to satisfy both the expectations of coalition members and the demands of election campaigning. In the 2010 elections, incumbents performed dismally when they limited their coalitions to bureaucratic officials, assembly members and business contractors—that is, strictly to the members of a local mafia. The pressures imposed by direct elections destabilized mafias everywhere except in the highlands, and even there violence marred their reelection campaigns. The most successful mafias expanded their coalitions by mobilizing popular constituencies, like the challenger in Labuhan Batu, or by accommodating machines, like the incumbent in Sibolga. The implication is that unless they are unopposed mafias cannot muster a minimum winning coalition.[7]

---

[5] Elites who were excluded from power during the New Order, such as labor organizers and traditional ethnic leaders, are exceptions to this generalization.

[6] See, for example, Hadiz, *Localising Power*; Schulte Nordholt, "Renegotiating Boundaries;" and Buehler, "Decentralisation and Local Democracy."

[7] For a brief introduction to minimum winning coalitions, see Richard Doner, Bryan Ritchie and Dan Slater, "Systemic Vulnerability and the Origins of Developmental States: Northeast

Factors beyond the district, however, constrain mafia capacity to incorporate wider constituencies. In particular, central efforts to curtail what have been depicted as the excessive dangers of decentralization are increasingly undermining the ability of mafias to generate patronage and outspend opponents. As early as 2002, the Megawati administration was pursuing legislation intended to reestablish central authority to manage natural resources and to sanction district governments. For example, the Ministry of Forestry regained sole authority over forestry regulation and taxation with Government Regulation (*Peraturan Pemerintah*) No. 34/2002 and the Ministry of Public Works took back some responsibility for water management in Law No. 7/2004.[8] President Megawati's counter-reforms culminated with Law No. 32/2004 on Regional Government, which she signed just before leaving office. By creating direct local elections and requiring party nominations that represent 15% of the electorate, the law reset the electoral ground rules.[9] The changes inflated campaign costs and placed new strains on local mafias. In addition, it took several initial steps toward making districts subservient once again to provinces and the center. The law recycled New Order jargon by designating governors "the representative of the center to the

---

and Southeast Asia in Comparative Perspective," *International Organization* 59.2 (Spring, 2005): 327-361.

[8] McCarthy, "Sold down the river," 170-171; Jake Ricks, personal communication, 27 April 2011.

[9] Buehler, "Decentralisation and Local Democracy," 271.

regions,"[10] and it curtailed the ability of a district assembly to impeach its executive while granting the central government unilateral power to do so.[11]

The Yudhoyono administration extended Megawati's recentralization agenda. Law No. 28/2009, for example, established a closed-list of allowable local taxes, effectively dictating tax legislation to the districts.[12] Government Regulation 19/2010 empowered governors by granting them unspecified powers to reward and punish district executives.[13] Finally, in 2010 the administration was considering a radical revision to Law No. 32/2004 that would give governors extensive powers over the districts, including sole responsibility to appoint, promote and reassign local civil servants.[14]

The new legislation, combined with the shortcomings of mafias, created the opportunity for national parties to step in to local government, replacing mafias. In North Sumatra, Golkar is the party which has done the most to take advantage, and its candidates have replaced local mafias in at least seven North Sumatran districts and cities since 2005: Medan, Serdang Bedagai, Asahan, Tanjung Balai, Tapanuli Selatan, Tapanuli Tengah and Sibolga. Less than ten years after reforms took effect, counter-reform has restored the advantage to centralized parties in contests over control of the regions, at least in North Sumatra.

---

[10] Eko Ari Wibowo, "Kewenangan Gubernur Akan Diperkuat," *Tempo Interaktif*, 29 October 2009; accessed 29 August 2010; Cecep Effendi, "Decentralization: Defining the role of provincial governors," *The Jakarta Post*, 17 July 2008; and Hadiz, *Localising Power*, 79-80. On New Order use of the phrase, see Malley, "Regions: Centralization and Resistance," 79.

[11] Buehler, "Decentralisation and Local Democracy," 279; Schulte Nordholt and van Klinken, "Introduction," in *Renegotiating Boundaries*: 14-15.

[12] To be fair, the central government also promised the law would increase local tax revenues. Hariatni Novitasari, "Implikasi Pemberlakuan UU No 28/2009 tentang Pajak Daerah dan Retribusi Daerah," *Jawa Pos*, 23 November 2009.

[13] Redhi Setiadi, "Penguatan Peran Gubernur lewat PP 19/2010," *Jawa Pos*, 16 March 2010.

[14] Cecep Effendi and Sony Sjahril, "Reshaping regional autonomy," *The Jakarta Post*, 14 February 2011.

Defeat at the polls combined with the widespread criticism of "little kings" puts local politicians in a very weak position to resist counter-reforms. Meanwhile, the Yudhoyono administration presses the advantage by campaigning for additional recentralizing measures. A key example is the proposal to abolish direct gubernatorial elections. Some national figures have advocated a return to holding indirect elections in provincial assemblies, while others prefer presidential appointments.[15] Regardless of its specific form, the proposed change would further disadvantage locally-based politicians. Considering the advantages that machines already enjoy because of their access to provincial budgets and bureaucracies, placing the selection of governors in the hands of the parties would greatly increase their hegemony over local politics.

Two issues particularly important to local politicians in North Sumatra, plantation revenue sharing and forest reclassification, illustrate the consequences of recentralization. North Sumatran politicians lack leverage to push legislation at the national level. Since the 1990's, successive governors have lobbied the central government to return a share of the vast plantation revenues generated in North Sumatra to the province.[16] It is not surprising that during the New Order the plea was ignored. But in 2006, sixteen Governors of plantation-rich provinces signed a letter to the President requesting 25 percent ownership of the state-owned estates and an 80% share of the export taxes

---

[15] "Gubernur Dipilih DPRD Untungkan Incumbent," *Harian Medan Bisnis*, 13 December 2010; Redhi, "Penguatan Peran Gubernur lewat PP 19/2010," *Jawa Pos*, 16 March 2010.
[16] Siti Amelia, "Harus Cerdik Tuntut DPHP," *Seputar Indonesia*, 26 June 2011.

levied on their products.[17] Despite initially promising to act on the request, to date President Yudhoyono has not, preferring instead to maintain central control over the lucrative revenues.[18] North Sumatra has been similarly helpless promoting provincial forest reclassification. In 2005, the Ministry of Forestry issued a decree letter (*Surat Keputusan, SK Menhut No. 44/2005*) fixing the province's forest boundaries at 3,742,120 Ha, classified into various categories.[19] The letter elicited widespread consternation because government offices and villages alike fell within forest boundaries and lost their legal standing.[20] The affected districts, in coordination with the provincial government, proposed boundary revisions intended to reduce drastically forest reserves, presumably in order to maximize logging opportunities and to mask illegally logged areas.[21] In 2009 the governor submitted a revised and weakened proposal to the Ministry, but the central government, emboldened by North Sumatra's internal bickering, responded by dragging its feet.[22] On both of these important issues, the central government has maintained a strong

---

[17] "16 Provinsi Usulkan Bagi Hasil Sektor Perkebunan Milik Negara," *Suara Pembaruan*, 12 May 2006.

[18] Anang Anas Azhar, "Presiden Didesak Revisi UU No 33/2004: Triliunan Rupiah Hasil Perkebunan di Sumut Ditarik Pusat," *Harian Medan Bisnis*, 28 Jan 2011. However, the revision of Law No. 32/2004 currently under consideration may finally initiate plantation revenue sharing. See Effendi and Sjahril, "Reshaping regional autonomy," *The Jakarta Post,* 14 February 2011.

[19] Khaerudin, "Pelepasan Kawasan Hutan di Sumut Belum Tentu Disetujui," *Kompas*, 30 June 2009.

[20] "SK Menhut No. 44/2005 Rugikan Rakyat, Perlu Revisi atau Hapus Total?," *Harian Sinar Indonesia Baru*, 23 May 2007; Hardi Munthe, "SK Menhut 22/2005 Masih Bermasalah," *WALHI Sumatera Utara*, Press Release No. 07/PR/WSU/V/07, 20 July 2007; accessed at walhisumut.wordpress.com, 12 July 2011.

[21] "Baru Sedikit Kabupaten Ajukan Usul – Revisi SK Menhut No 44/2005," *Kompas*, 21 September 2007; Nora Deliyana Lumbangaol, "Krisis hutan, Gubsu harus bentuk tim independen," *Waspada Online*, 17 April 2010; accessed 23 August 2010.

[22] "Revisi Kawasan Hutan Sumut Masuk Program 100 Hari Menhut," *Kompas*, 18 November 2009; "Menhut Revisi SK Penunjukan Hutan di Sumut," *Media Indonesia*, 25 February 2011.

enough position vis-à-vis the regions to dictate the timing and terms of the debate.

**Competitive Elections**

Paradoxically, counter-reform made the 2010 local elections in North Sumatra more competitive than the previous round. Only 7 incumbents or proxies won reelection in 2010, compared to 10 in 2005.[23] Competition increased because recentralizing legislation, such as Law No. 32/2004, empowered party machines to displace well-established mafias in many districts. Equally important, Golkar largely avoided the pitfalls of internal strife. Consequently, the most consequential contests occurred vertically, between locally-oriented mafias and centrally-oriented machines, not horizontally, between rival factions.

The heightened competition increased democratic participation in two ways. First, elections presented a meaningful choice to voters, as the difference in orientation between local mafias and party machines affects the local government's capacity to distribute patronage as well as its attitude toward issues such as plantation revenue sharing and forest reclassification. When given a choice voters were able to sanction unpopular incumbents and North Sumatrans did not hesitate to do so by rejecting many incumbent candidates and their proxies. Second, close competition among contending candidates pressured some to mobilize new constituencies in an effort to attract more votes. As a result, mafias, machines or both expanded their coalitions in some places to include NGO's, youth groups, farmers'

---

[23] Author's personal data, compiled from various sources.

associations, local communities and religious associations. Once they join a coalition, social organizations expect elites to respond to their concerns and distribute patronage to their members. In this way, they involve their constituencies in the political process and may, through the threat of withdrawing their support, help to hold local governments accountable.

If Golkar's machine continues to dominate local politics in North Sumatra, however, intense electoral competition may well prove to have been a temporary phenomenon. The year 2010 may signal a shift away from mafias and toward the machine, especially if Golkar maintains its current coherence. Palm oil mafias, confined to plantation districts and dependent on volatile commodity markets, pose a contingent, localized threat to Golkar but do not challenge its overall hegemony. If other local mafias continue to decline, and current national policy trends suggest that they might, then viable challengers may not emerge in 2015 to oppose the provincial machine's incumbents. Under such circumstances, high levels of participation are unlikely to reoccur. As Steven Erie argues of urban machines in the United States, once they consolidate control over a city, machines limit entry into the coalition and access to the patronage rolls.[24] Absent the threat of losing power, machines have every incentive to expend patronage only to reward tenured members of the coalition.

It is very difficult to make generalizations about Indonesia's democracy, even those limited in scope to North Sumatra, because it continues to change very rapidly. Each round of local elections since the end of the New Order has followed a different set of guidelines, with more legal changes

---

[24] Steven Erie, *Rainbow's End,* 6-17.

likely in store. Accordingly, each round has favored different elites and produced different types of governments. Nevertheless, some questions appear settled, at least temporarily. Local government in North Sumatra has not been taken over by dynastic bosses in the manner of the Philippines. The 2010 elections, in stark contrast to the Philippines, demonstrated the deficiencies of the local state as a source of dynastic political power. Instead, party machines relied on provincial power and patronage to seize office in strategic local districts, even without previously existing grassroots support. As a result, local government in North Sumatra, at least for the next several years, will be dominated by the concerns of a machine as Golkar prepares for the 2014 general elections.

# LIST OF PRESS SOURCES

*Analisa Daily*

*Antara News*

*Berita Sore*, accessed at www.beritasore.com.

*Bitra Indonesia*, accessed at bitra.or.id.

*Bulletin Serdang Bedagai*, a publication of the Public Relations Division of the Serdang Bedagai District Government (*Bagian Humasy Setdakab Serdang Bedagai*)

*Detik.com*, accessed at www.detik.com.

*The Economist*

*Ekspos News*, accessed at eksposnews.com.

*Harian Mandiri*, accessed at harianmandiri.wordpress.com.

*Harian Medan Bisnis*

*Harian Sinar Indonesia Baru*

*Harian Sumut Pos*

*Harian Waspada*

*Indosiar.com*, accessed at www.indosiar.com/fokus.

*Ini Medan Bung*, accessed at www.inimedanbung.com.

*The Jakarta Post*

*Jawa Pos*

*Kompas*

*Labuhanbatu News*, accessed at labuhanbatunews.wordpress.com.

*Majalah Tempo*

*Media Indonesia*

*Metro Rantau*

*Metro Tabagsel* (*Tapanuli Bagian Selatan*, Southern Part of Tapanuli)

*MK Online*, accessed at www.mahkamahkonstitusi.go.id.

*Pos Metro Medan*

*Seputar Indonesia*

*Star Berita*, accessed at www.starberita.com.

*Suara Karya Online*, accessed at www.suarakarya-online.com.

*Suara Pembaruan*

*Tempo Interaktif*, accessed at www.tempointeraktif.com.

*Tribun Medan*

*Waspada Online*, accessed at www.waspada.co.id.

# BIBLIOGRAPHY

Anderson, Benedict. "Old State, New Society: Indonesia's New Order in Comparative Historical Perspective," *Journal of Asian Studies* 42.3 (1983): 477-496.

Aragon, Lorraine. "Elite competition in Central Sulawesi," in *Renegotiating Boundaries: Local Politics in Post-Suharto Indonesia,* Henk Schulte Nordholt and Gerry van Klinken, eds. (Leiden: KITLV Press, 2007): 39-66.

Aspinall, Edward, Sebastian Dettman and Eve Warburton. "When religion trumps ethnicity: A regional election case study from Indonesia," *South East Asia Research* 19.1 (March 2011): 27-58.

Badan Perencanaan dan Pembangunan Nasional. "Permasalahan Proyek-proyek Pinjaman JICA Tahun Anggaran 2010, Posisi: 31 Maret 2010," 31 March 2010; accessed at www.bappenas.go.id/get-file-server/node/9968/, 15 April 2011.

Badan Pusat Statistik. "Population Census 2010: Province Sumatera Utara," 2010; accessed at www.bps.go.id, 6 July 2011.

Badan Pusat Statistik Serdang Bedagai [BPS Sergai]. "Kabupaten Serdang Bedagai in Figures 2006," 2006.

-------- "Kabupaten Serdang Bedagai in Figures 2009," 2009.

Badan Pusat Statistik Sumatera Utara [BPS Sumut]. "Sumatera Utara in Figures 2009," 2009.

Barter, Shane. "The Dangers of Decentralization: Clientelism, the State, & Nature in a Democratic Indonesia," *Federal Governance* 1:6 (Winter 2008): 1-15.

Batubara, Yos. "Evaluasi Hasi Penyelenggaraan Pemilu 2009: Dari Babak Baru Pemilihan Secara Langsung Tahun 2004 Ke Babak Pemilihan Secara Langsung Dengan Suara Terbanyak Tahun 2009 Kabupaten Labuhanbatu – Sumatera Utara," *TePI Indonesia*, no date.

Buehler, Michael. "The Rising Importance of Personal Networks in Indonesian Local Politics: An Analysis of District Government Head Elections in South Sulawesi in 2005," in *Deepening Democracy in Indonesia? Direct Elections for Local Leaders (Pilkada)*, Maribeth Erb and Priyambudi Sulistiyanto, eds. (Singapore: ISEAS, 2009): 101-124.

-------- "Decentralisation and Local Democracy in Indonesia: The Marginalisation of the Public Sphere," in *Problems of Democratisation in Indonesia: Elections, Institutions and Society*, Edward Aspinall and Marcus Mietzner, eds. (Singapore: ISEAS, 2010): 267-285.

Buehler, Michael and Paige Tan. "Party Candidate Relationships in Indonesian Local Politics: A Case Study of the 2005 Regional Elections in Gowa, South Sulawesi Province," *Indonesia* 84 (October 2007): 41-69.

Bush, Robin. "Regional Sharia Regulations in Indonesia: Anomaly or Symptom?" in *Expressing Islam: Religious Life and Politics in Indonesia*, Greg Fealy and Sally White, eds. (Singapore: ISEAS, 2008): 174-191.

Chandra, Siddharth and Douglas Kammen. "Generating Reforms and Reforming Generations: Military Politics in Indonesia's Democratic Transition and Consolidation," *World Politics* 55.1 (October 2002): 96-136.

Choi, Nankyung. "Local Elections and Democracy in Indonesia: The Riau Archipelago," *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 37.3 (August 2007): 326-345.

Davidson, Jamie. "Politics-as-usual on trial: Regional anti-corruption campaigns in Indonesia," *The Pacific Review* 20.1 (March 2007): 75-99.

-------- "Studies of Massive, Collective Violence in Post-Soeharto Indonesia" *Critical Asian Studies* 41.2 (2009): 329-349.

Davidson, Jamie and David Henley, eds. *The Revival of Tradition in Indonesian Politics: The deployment of adat from colonialism to indigenism* (New York: Routledge, 2007).

Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat Daerah Provinsi Sumatera Utara [DPRD Sumut]. "Fraksi-Fraksi," no date; accessed at www.dprd-sumutprov.go.id, 27 June 2011.

Dinas Perkebunan Propinsi Sumatera Utara [Disbun Sumut]. "Rekapitulasi Luas Areal dan Produksi Komoditi Kelapa Sawit Propinsi Sumatera Utara," 2004; accessed at www.deptan.go.id/daerah_new/sumut/disbun_sumut/index, 15 April 2010.

-------- "Rekapitulasi Luas Areal dan Produksi Komoditi Karet per Kabupaten di Propinsi Sumatera Utara," 2004; accessed at www.deptan.go.id/daerah_new/sumut/disbun_sumut/index, 15 April 2010.

Direktorat Jenderal Perimbangan Keuangan [Ditjen Perimbangan Keuangan]. "Data APBD Tahun 2010," *Kementerian Keuangan Republik Indonesia*, 20 July 2010; accessed at www.djpk.depkeu.go.id, 23 June 2011.

-------- "Informasi Peraturan Daerah: Peraturan Daerah Kab. Serdang Bedagai," *Kementerian Keuangan Republik Indonesia*, no date; accessed at www.djpk.depkeu.go.id/pdrd, 21 April 2011

Doner, Richard, Bryan Ritchie and Dan Slater. "Systemic Vulnerability and the Origins of Developmental States: Northeast and Southeast Asia in Comparative Perspective," *International Organization* 59.2 (Spring, 2005): 327-361.

Erie, Steven. *Rainbow's End: Irish-Americans and the Dilemma of Urban Machine Politics, 1840-1985* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988).

Etzioni, Amitai. *A Comparative Analysis of Complex Organizations: On Power, Involvement, and Their Correlates* (New York: Free Press of Glencoe, 1961).

Geddes, Barbara. "How the Cases You Choose Affect the Answers You Get: Selection Bias in Comparative Politics," *Political Analysis* 2 (1990): 131-150.

Hadi Shubhan, M. "'Recall': Antara Hak Partai Politik dan Hak Berpolitik Anggota Parpol," *Jurnal Konstitusi* 3.4 (December 2006): 30-57.

Hadiz, Vedi. "Power and Politics in North Sumatra: The Uncompleted *Reformasi*," in *Local Power and Politics in Indonesia: Decentralisation & Democratisation*, Edward Aspinall and Greg Fealy, eds. (Singapore: ISEAS, 2003): 119-131.

-------- *Localising Power in Post-Authoritarian Indonesia: A Southeast Asia Perspective* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010).

Hardi Munthe. "SK Menhut 22/2005 Masih Bermasalah," *WALHI Sumatera Utara*, Press Release No. 07/PR/WSU/V/07, 20 July 2007; accessed at walhisumut.wordpress.com, 12 July 2011.

Hidayat, Syarif. "*Pilkada*, Money Politics and the Dangers of 'Informal Governance' Practices," in *Deepening Democracy in Indonesia? Direct Elections for Local Leaders (Pilkada)*, Maribeth Erb and Priyambudi Sulistiyanto, eds. (Singapore: ISEAS, 2009): 125-146.

Honna, Jun. "From *dwifungsi* to NKRI: Regime change and political activism of the Indonesian military," in *Democratization in Post-Suharto Indonesia*, Marco Bunte and Andreas Ufen, eds. (New York: Routledge, 2009): 226-247.

International Crisis Group [ICG]. "Indonesia: Preventing Violence in Local Elections," Asia Report No. 197, 8 December 2007.

Kammen, Douglas. "Pilkades: Democracy, Village Elections, and Protest in Indonesia," in *Southeast Asia Over Three Generations: Essays Presented to Benedict R. O'G. Anderson*, ed. James Siegel and Audrey Kahin (Ithaca: Cornell SEAP, 2003): 303-330.

Kimura, Ehito. "Proliferating provinces: Territorial politics in post-Suharto Indonesia," *South East Asia Research* 18.3 (2010): 415-449.

Klinken, Gerry van. "Return of the sultans: The communitarian turn in local politics," in *The Revival of Tradition in Indonesian Politics: The deployment of adat from colonialism to indigenism*, Jamie Davidson and David Henley, eds. (New York: Routledge, 2007): 149-169.

Komisi Pemilihan Umum Deli Serdang [KPU Deli Serdang]. "Berita Acara: Rekapitulasi Hasil Penghitungan Suara Komisi Pemilihan Umum Kabupaten/Kota untuk Pemilihan Umum Anggota DPRD Provinsi," 21 April 2004.

-------- "Berita Acara Rekapitulasi Hasil Suara Komisi Pemilihan Umum Kabupaten/Kota untuk Pemilihan Umum Anggota DPR dan DPD," 22 April 2004.

Komisi Pemilihan Umum Labuhanbatu [KPU Labuhanbatu]. "Profil Calon Kepala Daerah dan Wakil Kepala Daerah," in *Laporan: Penyelenggaraan Pemilihan Kepala Daerah & Wakil Kepala Daerah Kabupaten Labuhanbatu Tahun 2005 Buku 1*, Rantauprapat, January 2006: 55-69.

-------- "Lampiran 1: Rekapitulasi Hasil Penghitungan Suara Pilkada 2005," in *Laporan: Penyelenggaraan Pemilihan Kepala Daerah & Wakil Kepala Daerah Kabupaten Labuhanbatu Tahun 2005 Buku 1*, Rantauprapat, January 2006: Appendix 1.

-------- "Rekapitulasi Jumlah Pemilih, TPS dan Surat Suara Pemilihan Umum Kepala Daerah dan Wakil Kepala Daerah di Tingkat Kabupaten," Rantauprapat, 18 June 2010.

Komisi Pemilihan Umum Serdang Bedagai [KPU Sergai]. "Berita Acara Rekapitulasi Acara Hasil Penghitungan Suara Pemilihan Kepala Daerah dan Wakil Kepala Daerah di Tingkat Kabupaten/Kota oleh Komisi Pemilihan Umum Daerah Kabupaten/Kota," 2 July 2005.

-------- "Daftar Riwayat Hidup (Bio Data) Pasangan Calon Kepala Daerah dan Wakil Kepala Daerah Kabupaten Serdang Bedagai," 2010.

Komisi Pemilihan Umum Sumatera Utara [KPU Sumut]. "Daftar Perolehan Suara Calon Kepala Daerah dan Wakil Kepala Daerah Kabupaten Kota Se Sumatera Utara Pemilukada Tanggal 12 Mei 2010," 2010.

-------- "Daftar Perolehan Suara Calon Kepala Daerah dan Wakil Kepala Daerah Kabupaten Kota Se Sumatera Utara: Pemilukada Tanggal 16 Juni 2010," 2010.

-------- "Daftar Nama-Nama Anggota DPRD Provinsi Sumatera Utara Hasil Pemilihan Umum 2004," no date; accessed at www.kpusumut.org, 13 April 2010.

-------- "Data Calon Terpilih Anggota DPRD Sumut Per Daerah Pemilihan," no date; accessed at www.kpusumut.org, 13 April 2010.

-------- "Rekapitulasi Jumlah Pemilih, PPK PPS, TPS, Dan Hasil Perolehan Suara Masing-Masing Pasangan Calon dalam Pemilihan Kepala Daerah Kabupaten / Kota Tahun 2005 di Provinsi Sumatera Utara (Tahap 1)," no date; accessed at www.kpusumut.org, 13 April 2010

Komisi Pemilihan Umum Tapanuli Selatan [KPU Tapsel]. "Daftar Nama Pasangan Calon Kepala Daerah dan Wakil Kepala Daerah yang Terdaftar di KPU Kabupaten Tapanuli Selatan," Divisi Peserta Pemilu dan Pencalonan, 8 April 2005.

-------- "Laporan Perkembangan dan Permasalahan Penyelenggaraan Pemilihan Kepala Daerah dan Wakil Kepala Daerah, Kabupaten Tapanuli Selatan," Divisi Hukum dan Hubungan antar Lembaga, April 2005.

-------- "Surat Nomor: 270/ 436 /KPU-TS/V/05, Perihal: Permintaan Klarifikasi Calon Kepala Daerah dan Wakil Kepala Daerah dari DPD Partai Golkar Kabupaten Tapanuli Selatan," 2 May 2005.

-------- "Berita Acara No: 31/KPU-TS/V/05 Tentang Surat Nomor 270/436/KPU-TS/V/05 tanggal 02 Mei 2005 perihal Permintaan Klarifikasi Calon Kepala Daerah dan Wakil Depala Daerah dari DPD Partai GOLKAR Kabupaten Tapanuli Selatan," 11 May 2005.

-------- "Rincian Perolehan Suara Sah dan Tidak Sah Pemilihan Umum Kepala Daerah dan Wakil Kepala Daerah: Kabupaten Tapanuli Selatan dari Setiap Kecamatan dalam Wilayah Kabupaten," 2010.

Kuhonta, Erik Martinez, Dan Slater and Tuong Vu. "Introduction: The Contributions of Southeast Asian Political Studies," in *Southeast Asia in Political Science: Theory, Region and Qualitative Analysis*, Erik Martinez Kuhonta, Dan Slater and Tuong Vu, eds. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008): 1-29.

Majelis Pimpinan Wilayah, Pemuda Pancasila Sumatera Utara. "Kantor Ranting – Cabang Kabupaten Serdang Bedagai," no date; accessed at www.ppsumut.com, 8 April 2011.

Malley, Michael. "Regions: Centralization and Resistance," in *Indonesia Beyond Suharto: Polity, Economy, Society, Transition*, Donald Emmerson, ed. (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1999): 71-105.

-------- "New Rules, Old Structures and the Limits of Democratic Decentralisation," in *Local Power and Politics in Indonesia: Decentralisation & Democratisation*, Edward Aspinall and Greg Fealy, eds. (Singapore: ISEAS, 2003): 102-116.

McCarthy, John. "Power and Interest on Sumatra's Rainforest Frontier: Clientelist Coalitions, Illegal Logging and Conservation in the Alas Valley," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 33.1 (February 2002): 77-106.

-------- "Sold down the river: Renegotiating public power over nature in Central Kalimantan," in *Renegotiating Boundaries: Local Politics in Post-Suharto Indonesia*, Henk Schulte Nordholt and Gerry van Klinken, eds. (Leiden: KITLV Press, 2007): 151-176.

Mietzner, Marcus. "Local democracy: Old elites are still in power, but direct elections now give voters a chance," *Inside Indonesia* 85 (Jan-Mar 2006): 17-18.

-------- "Indonesia and the pitfalls of low-quality democracy: A case study of the gubernatorial elections in North Sulawesi," in *Democratization in Post-Suharto Indonesia*, Marco Bunte and Andreas Ufen, eds. (New York: Routledge, 2009): 124-150.

-------- "Political opinion polling in post-authoritarian Indonesia: Catalyst or obstacle to democratic consolidation?" *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* 165.1 (2009): 95-126.

Ockey, James. "The Rise of Local Power in Thailand: Provincial Crime, Elections and the Bureaucracy," in *Money and Power in Provincial Thailand*, Ruth McVey, ed. (Singapore: ISEAS, 2000): 74-96.

Reid, Anthony. *The Blood of the People: Revolution and the End of Traditional Rule in Northern Sumatra* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1979).

Ryter, Loren. "Their Moment in the Sun: The New Indonesian Parliamentarians from the Old OKP," in *State of Authority*, van Klinken and Barker, eds.: 181-218.

Schulte Nordholt, Henk. "Renegotiating Boundaries: Access, agency and identity in post-Suharto Indonesia," *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* 159 (2003): 550-589.

Schulte Nordholt, Henk and Gerry van Klinken. "Introduction," in *Renegotiating Boundaries: Local Politics in Post-Suharto Indonesia*, Henk Schulte Nordholt and Gerry van Klinken, eds. (Leiden: KITLV Press, 2007): 1-29.

Seri Pendokumentasian Best Practices Inovasi Kabupaten di Indonesia, BKKSI 2008. "Unit Pelayanan Perijinan Terpadu Satu Pintu, Melawan 'Penyakit Birokrasi', Meningkatkan Retribusi," *Yayasan Inovasi Pemerintahan Daerah*, 6 February 2009; accessed at www.yipd.or.id, 1 April 2011.

Shefter, Martin. *Political Parties and the State: The American Historical Experience* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994).

Sidel, John. *Capital, Coercion, and Crime: Bossism in the Philippines*. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999).

-------- "Bossism and Democracy in the Philippines, Thailand, and Indonesia: Towards an Alternative Framework for the Study of 'Local Strongmen'" in *Politicising Democracy: The New Local Politics of Democratisation*, ed. John Harriss, Kristian Stokke and Olle Törnquist (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004): 51-74.

Simandjuntak, Deasy. "Milk Coffee at 10AM: Encountering the State through *Pilkada* in North Sumatra," in *State of Authority: The State in Society*

*in Indonesia*, Gerry van Klinken and Joshua Barker, eds. (Ithaca: Cornell SEAP, 2009): 73-94.

Situs Resmi Pemerintah Kabupaten Tapanuli Tengah. “Sejarah,” no date; accessed at www.tapteng.go.id, 8 March 2011.

Slater, Dan. “Indonesia’s Accountability Trap: Party Cartels and Presidential Power after Democratic Transition,” *Indonesia* 78 (October 2004): 61-92.

-------- *Ordering Power: Contentious Politics and Authoritarian Leviathans in Southeast Asia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

Smith, Claire. “The Return of the Sultan? Patronage, Power, and Political Machines in ‘Post’-Conflict North Maluku,” in *Deepening Democracy in Indonesia? Direct Elections for Local Leaders (Pilkada)*, Maribeth Erb and Priyambudi Sulistiyanto, eds. (Singapore: ISEAS, 2009): 303-326.

Stoler, Ann. *Capitalism and Confrontation in Sumatra’s Plantation Belt, 1870-1979* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985).

Sukardi Rinakit. “Indonesian regional elections in praxis,” *IDSS Commentaries* No. 65 (Singapore: Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies, 27 September 2005).

Tomsa, Dirk. “Uneven party institutionalization, protracted transition and the remarkable resilience of Golkar,” in *Democratization in Post-Suharto Indonesia*, Marco Bunte and Andreas Ufen, eds. (New York: Routledge, 2009): 176-198.

Tilly, Charles. *From Mobilization to Revolution* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1978).

Tsai, Yen-ling and Douglas Kammen. “Anti-Communist Violence and the Ethnic Chinese in Medan, North Sumatra,” in Douglas Kammen and Katharine McGregor, eds. *The Contours of Mass violence in Indonesia, 1965-1968* (Singapore: NUS Press for the Asian Studies Association of Australia, forthcoming 2012).

Van Evera, Stephen. *Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997).

Weber, Max. *The Methodology of the Social Sciences*, trans. Edward Shils and Henry Finch (Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1949).

Website Pemerintah Kabupaten Serdang Bedagai. "Pembangunan Pertanian dan Peternakan Kabupaten Sergai," 2006; accessed at www.serdangbedagaikab.go.id, 29 July 2011.

Website Pemerintah Kabupaten Serdang Bedagai. "Potensi Perkebunan," no date; accessed at www.serdangbedagaikab.go.id, 29 July 2011.

Wikipedia. "Bomer Pasaribu," no date; accessed at www.id.wikipedia.org, 19 July 2011.

Wilson, Ian. "The Rise and Fall of Political Gangsters in Indonesian Democracy," in *Problems of Democratisation in Indonesia: Elections, Institutions and Society*, Edward Aspinall and Marcus Mietzner, eds. (Singapore: ISEAS, 2010): 199-218.

# APPENDIX: OVERVIEW OF THE 2010 NORTH SUMATRA ELECTIONS[1]

| | Location | Golkar Wins | Incumbent Wins | Incumbent Loses | Interpretation |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| East Coast | Medan City | **Yes** | **Yes** | | Machine |
| | Serdang Bedagai | **Yes** | **Yes** | | Machine →Mobilization |
| | Asahan | **Yes** | No | Proxy incumbent | Machine |
| | Tanjung Balai City[2] | **Yes** | No | Proxy incumbent | Machine |
| | Tebing Tinggi City[3] | No | **Yes (Proxy)** | | Mafia |
| | Labuhan Batu | No | No | Proxy incumbent | Mafia →Mobilization |
| | Labuhan Batu Utara | No | No | | *Palm oil mafia* |
| | Labuhan Batu Selatan | No | No | | *Palm oil mafia* |
| | Binjai City | No | No | Proxy incumbent | *?* |
| Interior Highlands | Tapanuli Selatan | **Yes** | No | Incumbent | Machine |
| | Pakpak Bharat | **Yes** | No[4] | Proxy incumbent | Mafia |
| | Samosir | No | **Yes** | Deputy incumbent | Mafia |
| | Humbang Hasundutan | No | **Yes** | | Mafia |
| | Pematang Siantar City | No | No | Incumbent | *Palm oil mafia* |
| | Simalungun | No | No | Incumbent | *?* |
| | Toba Samosir | No | No | Incumbent | *?* |
| | Karo | No | No | | *?* |
| West Coast | Tapanuli Tengah[5] | **Yes** | No | Proxy incumbent | Machine |
| | Sibolga City | No[6] | **Yes (Proxy)** | Deputy incumbent | Mafia →Machine |
| | Mandailing Natal[7] | No | No | | *Palm oil mafia* |

Notes listed on following page.

## Notes to Appendix

[1] Chart based on author's personal data, compiled from various sources.

[2] On 28 September 2010, the Constitutional Court (MK, *Mahkamah Konstitusi*) ordered Tanjung Balai to repeat the election in 17 municipal wards because of "systematic money politics," effectively overturning the incumbent's son's victory. Golkar's candidate won in the follow-up election on 22 November 2010 ("MK Perintahkan Pilkada Ulang Tanjungbalai," *MK Online*, 29 September 2010; accessed 13 July 2011).

[3] On 9 June 2010, the Constitutional Court ruled the victorious Golkar candidate ineligible because he was still under probation for a previous corruption conviction and ordered Tebing Tinggi to repeat the election. The incumbent's younger brother won the follow-up election on 28 June 2011 ("MK Perintahkan Pemungutan Suara Ulang Pemiliukada Kota Tebing Tinggi," *MK Online*, 14 June 2010; accessed 5 July 2011).

[4] Although technically not the incumbent, the victorious candidate was incumbent deputy executive and the younger brother of the 2005 election winner, who had died in office.

[5] The Tapanuli Tengah election took place on 12 March 2011.

[6] Although the candidate that Golkar nominated lost, the candidate who won was previously a Golkar representative in the national assembly (DPR, *Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat*).

[7] On 6 July 2010, the Constitutional Court ordered Mandailing Natal to repeat its election because of "money politics." The follow-up election took place on 24 April 2011. Hidayat Batubara, the son of a plantation tycoon, won both elections ("MK Perintahkan Pemungutan Suara Ulang di Mandailing Natal," *Media Indonesia*, 7 July 2010).